“That’s a better idea!”
Philosophical Progress in Philosophy for Children

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Abstract

Philosophy for Children is an important educational programme that engages children in philosophical inquiry as the means for them to make sense of the world. A key to its success is that students make progress in their attempts to make sense of the world or, more colloquially, they develop better ideas. Although philosophical progress is essential to the value of Philosophy for Children, there is little written on this concept and what is written tends to be merely suggestive. The result is that teachers and students often find themselves lost in the dialogical, open inquiry of Philosophy for Children where there are no pre-determined end-points or uncontroversial ‘right’ answers that they can move towards. This thesis uses philosophical analysis and inquiry to uncover the impediments to progress faced by this educational programme, and to answer the question: What conception of philosophical progress would be efficacious for Philosophy for Children?

I argue that it is efficacious for Philosophy for Children if we conceive of philosophical progress as moving from philosophical problems to philosophical resolutions, or in other words, philosophical progress is the movement from incongruous and inadequate conceptions to transformed conceptions where the problems no longer occur. I supplement this problem-resolution conception with other important pedagogical conceptions. A framework of philosophical inquiry enables students to keep their bearings as they move from philosophical problems to philosophical resolutions, and to identify milestones that indicate they are making progress. Philosophy for Children students know they are making progress because they move through the stages of the inquiry framework, reaching milestones on the path. They know they have made progress not because they have the ‘right’ answer, but because they have better conceptions that are in greater reflective equilibrium in comparison with the incongruous and inadequate conceptions they started with and in comparison with alternative resolutions. Students can learn to make philosophical progress in Philosophy for Children by participating in philosophical co-inquiry and exploration with their teacher. The teacher guides them by acting as an expedition-educator, enabling their party to find their way through unfamiliar terrain, and as a result students learn to make progress for themselves. Together, each of these conceptions makes up an efficacious conception of philosophical progress for Philosophy for Children. My recommendation is that this conception become a core feature of the Philosophy for Children programme as it provides needed scaffolding for the essential aim of making philosophical progress and thus enhances the educational value of the programme.
Declaration

This is to certify that

(i) the thesis compromises only my original work towards the PhD except where indicated in the Preface,

(ii) due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,

(iii) the thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

Signed
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Preface: Philosophy and Education

Disciplines comprise an untidy level of analysis in certain respects, in that the boundaries between them are constantly shifting and sometimes poorly demarcated … (Becher, 1989, 42)

This thesis is a work of philosophy and of education. I would have liked to leave it at that, but this sentence is deeply ambiguous, and is likely to lead to misunderstandings without further discussion of the rich interactions between the two disciplines. It is difficult enough to pin down the complex and diverse practices of philosophy or of education, but my main problem lies in explaining how the two are related in my own work. This preface is an attempt to disambiguate my simple opening statement and describe the ways that I intertwine philosophy and education in my interdisciplinary, boundary-blurring practice.

Because both philosophy and education are central to my academic work and to this thesis, locating myself in their confluence poses a profound challenge for me. This is not just a question about which field I am contributing to, but also a deeper problem about my academic identity. Although I studied academic philosophy and not education, I have subsequently worked extensively as a philosophy teacher and an educator of philosophy teachers, teaching about philosophy, teaching to philosophise, and researching these practices. I currently work as an academic in Education and I use the methods, tools and concepts of philosophy as the basis of both my pedagogical and research praxis. This thesis, which is broadly about philosophical learning and teaching, is an extension of this complex mix of philosophy and education. So, is this thesis a work of philosophy of education, teaching philosophy, or something else? Am I writing as a philosopher, an educator, a philosophy-educator, a philosopher of education or something else? Am I writing for philosophers, educators, philosophers of education, or all of these? While I have some affinity with some of these categories, none of them seem to be a comfortable fit.

There are multiple ways in which the disciplines of philosophy and education could mix, some of which I reject as incompatible with my own standpoint. I do not take a multidisciplinary approach where I first present a philosophical perspective and then an independent educational perspective on a common issue. Instead, I integrate the perspectives. I also do not take a cross-disciplinary approach where I, as Davies and Devlin (2007, 3) put it, “peer into” education from philosophy, using the tools and instruments of philosophy to analyse education but without doing any education. Nor do I peer into philosophy from education, using the tools of curriculum or pedagogical research to analyse philosophy teaching but without doing any philosophy. I integrate the approach of an educator, educational researcher and a philosopher into an interdisciplinary perspective because this offers greater insight and enhancement of practice than could have been obtained from philosophy or education alone.

Perhaps ‘Philosophy of Education’ is the most plausible way to describe the interdisciplinary relationship between philosophy and education in this thesis. However, this is still a highly ambiguous description that needs clarification and elaboration. First I need to examine whether philosophy of education, as I practise it, is primarily a branch of philosophy or of education, and second whether my aim is to provide a disinterested analysis or to have a practical effect.
Philosophy of education is sometimes claimed to be a branch of philosophy (Siegel, 2008, 227), and sometimes a branch of educational rather than philosophical research (Peters, 2008). Yet the philosophy of education in this thesis is as much philosophical as it is educational research. It is philosophical research because I use the methods of philosophy, and deal with philosophical issues, but it is educational because I apply these methods and resolve these issues to give greater insight into education and to enhance educational practice. Because of the integration, or perhaps cooperation, of philosophy and education in this thesis, the philosophy of education involved might be described in Hansson’s (2008) terms as “philosophy with education”.

Philosophy of education can also be detached or practical. A model of detached philosophy that I reject for this thesis is the cross-disciplinary approach which uses philosophy to analyse and understand a discipline, but without affecting it. For example, philosophy of art and philosophy of religion aim to observe but not to influence artistic and religious practice. On this approach, philosophy of education might be “…primarily a concerted attempt to elucidate and critically examine the conceptual relations, logical structures and justificatory patterns within current educational ideals” (Hirst, 2003, xv). I do not take this spectator or commentator approach.

Instead, this thesis falls within the practical philosophy tradition that stems from Dewey. It shares similarities with branches of philosophy such as medical ethics where the aim is to have an impact on the practice being investigated. Philosophy of Education, as practised in this thesis, is about illuminating education but it is equally about influencing, enhancing and constituting current and future educational practices. Thus it might be termed practical philosophy of education. But this should not be understood as applied philosophy in the sense of merely applying pre-existing philosophical insights or theories to solve educational problems or improve education practice, but without doing any philosophical research. The aim of this thesis is to do both practical philosophical and educational research.

Practical philosophy of education, for me, also includes a philosophical approach to pedagogy, learning and teaching where philosophy is the method of education. As such, the relationship between philosophy and education is well described by Lipman’s term “Educational Philosophy”, meaning “philosophy functioning educationally” (2004c, 6). So in this thesis, philosophy functions as a core educational method. By employing the intellectual tools and dispositions of philosophical thinking, conceptual understanding, critical analysis, dialogue and inquiry as part of the teaching and learning process, educational philosophy is the means to generate reflective learning and deep understanding, and to enable students to make sense of themselves and the world.

In summary, this thesis is intended to contribute to practical philosophy of education, philosophy with education, and educational philosophy. It is an interdisciplinary study (rather than cross-disciplinary or multidisciplinary) that integrates philosophical and educational research. Rather than providing a detached analysis, it uses philosophical methods to investigate and resolve philosophical issues that arise in educational practice, in order to make sense of learning and teaching, and to understand and enhance educational practice.
1. Introduction

Any philosophy, I knew, would be not only unconvincing but nonsensical to a person who misunderstood the problem it was meant to solve (Collingwood, 1939, 152)

There is something wonderful about participating in an animated philosophical dialogue that seems to move forward of its own accord. We experience the thrill of the chase when we pursue an idea into uncharted territory, and intellectual satisfaction when we finally achieve a new insight. This is an experience of what I call ‘philosophical progress.’

Philosophical progress, or its absence, is a major concern for the educational programme Philosophy for Children (P4C). The aim of P4C is to engage children and teenagers in philosophical discussion so they can make sense of themselves and the world. But if P4C students do not make progress developing better ideas, views and judgements, if they do not make progress with making sense, then P4C is nothing more than an epistemically pointless chat.

Yet despite the importance of philosophical progress to P4C, a comprehensive conception of what philosophical progress is or how to achieve it is nowhere available. P4C writers tend to focus on how to develop the skills and conditions needed for philosophical inquiry, and they only provide hints about what it means to make philosophical progress. Professional philosophers have a tacit understanding of when they are getting somewhere, and why one philosophical position is better than others, but this has not been developed into an explicit theory of philosophical progress that can be applied to P4C. Various theorists have proposed pictures of progress, development, growth and evolution, such as Hegel (1807), Spencer (1851), Darwin (1859), Kuhn (1962), and Piaget (1978), yet these have not proved useful for understanding and making philosophical progress in P4C.

Also, developing a new conception of philosophical progress for P4C is a challenge because such a conception would have to reconcile the seemingly irreconcilable. A conception of philosophical progress for P4C would have to show that progress is possible despite inevitable lack of agreement about philosophical issues, and despite P4C involving open inquiry with no pre-decided conclusions against which progress could be judged.

So, P4C needs a conception of philosophical progress, but currently does not have one, and developing such a conception is problematic. In light of this, the aim of this thesis is to use philosophical inquiry, analysis and argumentation to resolve the problems and answer the question: What conception of philosophical progress would be efficacious for Philosophy for Children? The end result will be a new conception of philosophical progress that will improve the theory and practice of P4C.

In this chapter I introduce the thesis and problem I have just outlined. I start by describing P4C, the context for this thesis, focussing on the core features of P4C as a philosophical education programme. I then introduce my area of concern, philosophical progress, which I describe as a type of epistemic progress. Next, I show that philosophical progress is problematic for P4C given the standard means of judging progress by how close we are to the ‘right’ answer cannot apply in P4C. This is because philosophy does not have simple or uncontroversial ‘right’ answers and because P4C is based on
dialogical, open inquiry without a pre-determined end-point. I then argue that this is an important problem to investigate: Making philosophical progress is essential to the practice of P4C, but the P4C literature does not provide an adequate conception of what this might mean or how to achieve this, so a conception of philosophical progress needs to be developed for P4C. In the penultimate section I describe the philosophical methods I use to develop a new conception of philosophical progress that will resolve the problems I identified, and then finally, I outline the structure of the rest of the thesis.

I. Philosophy for Children

In order to develop a conception of philosophical progress for P4C, I must first describe P4C in more detail. I briefly outline the history of P4C in section I. Then I describe its core features as an educational programme in section II, and as a programme of philosophical education in section III.

Philosophy for Children was created in 1969 when Columbia University philosopher Matthew Lipman wrote *Harry Stottlemeier’s Discovery*, his first novel designed to make philosophy available to children. Lipman then founded the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC) in 1974, at Montclair State College. At the IAPC, working with Anne Sharp, he built on his success and created a series of philosophical novels and teacher materials designed to stimulate, provoke and support philosophical inquiry with children (Gregory, 2008, 15).

Lipman’s motivation for creating P4C was his concern that children do not reason as well as they could, that they are presented with intellectually “banal and stodgy fare” at school, and that even though they have a natural hunger for meaning, their sense of wonder and curiosity does not survive their schooling (Lipman, 1993b). He saw that children need a way to make sense of their often seemingly meaningless and fragmented lives. At the most extreme, “children experience famine, slavery, child labour, incest, prostitution, maltreatment, bombings, the loss of loved ones and more” (Tozzi, 2007, 6). On a more mundane level, but equally important, children experience quandaries about the importance, nature and morality of their friendships, their own mind, their identity and their actions. Lipman believed that if philosophy were made available to children, it could provide them with reasoning skills, the disposition to be reasonable, and meaningful subject matter, which would enable them to make sense of their lives.

Lipman’s philosophical novels depict children raising philosophical problems, theories and arguments, and engaging in philosophical inquiry and dialogue about issues that arise in their everyday experience such as friendship, thinking, fairness or the mind. The novels do not name philosophers or philosophical positions, and do not present expert perspectives to be learned about. Instead, the depicted dialogue provides a stimulus for philosophical inquiry and a model of philosophical thinking for the readers. As well as these novels, purpose-written short stories, children’s literature, film, newspaper articles, art and museum exhibits are also used to stimulate philosophical inquiry in P4C. Each of the stimuli is chosen because it raises some sort of philosophical concern that children can relate to and inquire about.

The standard process of philosophical inquiry in P4C starts with students reading a novel or experiencing an alternative stimulus material, then, as a class, they identify what they found to be philosophically problematic and raise philosophical questions about these issues. The teacher helps them to engage in philosophical dialogue and inquiry to resolve their issues and answer their questions.

Classroom discussion plans and exercises are also offered. P4C teachers can use these to support students as they engage in philosophical inquiry stimulated by the novels or alternative stimuli. Discussion plans provide the P4C teacher with philosophical questions they can ask to help students to explore the philosophical issues that arise. Exercises present structured activities, on such topics as giving examples and counter-examples, that help students to learn to think philosophically. Discussion plans and exercises also provide a model of philosophical thinking that students can internalise.

P4C is most often associated with Lipman’s theoretical work, and the series of IAPC novels and teacher materials by Lipman and Sharp. Yet the tradition is broader than this and also includes alternative theoretical and pedagogical materials (see Box 1).
Box 1: The Philosophy for Children literature

The following is a list of some of the important works in the P4C literature. This list is not comprehensive, and has an Australasian flavour, but it gives the broad outline of the P4C tradition.

1) Foundational IAPC pedagogical materials. The first pedagogical materials for P4C were a set of novels purpose written for teaching P4C by Matthew Lipman. The following is a sequential list of these novels for primary through to middle years students, followed by its teacher manual and its authors:

- Elfie (2004a) & Getting our Thoughts Together (2004b) by Lipman
- Kio and Gus (1982b) & Wondering at the World (1986) by Lipman & Sharp

2) Alternative pedagogical materials. Phil Cam produced several collections of philosophical short stories and teacher manuals in the same mould as the Lipman novels and teacher manuals:


Other alternative pedagogical materials advocate using picture books as the stimulus for philosophical inquiry rather than purpose written materials:

- Books into Ideas (1993) by Tim Sprod

3) Foundational theoretical works by Matthew Lipman:

- Philosophy in the Classroom by Lipman, Sharp and Oscanyan (1980)
- Philosophy Goes to School (1988)

4) Philosophy for Children journals:

- Analytic Teaching and Thinking from the USA
- Critical and Creative Thinking from Australasia.

5) Collections of important and influential papers about P4C:

- Growing up with Philosophy (1978) co-edited by Lipman and Sharp
- Thinking, Children and Education (1993a) edited by Lipman.

6) Other important theoretical works and teacher texts:

- Philosophy and the Young Child (1980) and Dialogues with Children (1984) by Gareth Matthews
- Thinking Together (1995) by Phil Cam
- Teaching for Better Thinking (1995) by Splitter and Sharp
- Ethics and the Community of Inquiry (2006) by Burgh, Field and Freakley

7) Supplementary pedagogical materials. P4C also includes a number of supplementary materials to support philosophical inquiry in the classroom using the sorts of discussion plans and exercises presented in the original Lipman teacher manuals:

- Connecting Concepts (2002) by Clinton Golding
- Twenty Thinking Tools (2006a) by Phil Cam

8) Research. Research shows a number of educational benefits from P4C. For example, Trickey and Topping (2004) reviewed 10 of the best empirical studies of P4C and found that each study showed positive educational outcomes (without negative outcomes) in one or more of the areas of: logical reasoning, reading comprehension, mathematical skills, self-esteem, listening skills, expressive language, creative thinking, cognitive ability and emotional intelligence.
Each of materials in the P4C tradition extends and modifies the IAPC model in various ways, while remaining true to the pedagogical and philosophical foundations of P4C set by Lipman. Together these materials make up a consistent tradition or movement of philosophical education with a shared fundamental praxis, that can be distinguished from other traditions of teaching philosophy in schools such as Socratic Dialogue derived from the work of German philosopher Leonard Nelson, the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) philosophy curriculum, or philosophy taught in the International Baccalaureate. There are variations within the practice of P4C, but at this stage in the development of the movement these are currently variations on the fundamental praxis. For example, variations between different ways of stimulating philosophical inquiry (purpose-written novels and stories, picture books, art-works etc.) and whether these materials follow a philosophical curriculum or whether they are used to introduce philosophical issues on an ad hoc basis.

P4C is now a worldwide educational movement. The International Council of Philosophical Inquiry with Children website lists centres for P4C in 47 countries around the world (ICPIC, 2004) and the IAPC website lists “affiliate centres and individual contacts” from 45 different countries (IAPC, 2007). In these countries, P4C is taught at schools at the discretion of individual schools or teachers, though the P4C pedagogy has been influential on the school philosophy curriculum in many countries such as the senior philosophy curriculum of Victoria and Western Australia.

P4C was introduced to Australia in 1983 (Splitter, 2000, 40) or 1984 (Yule, 1991, 1), and it is now taught in numerous Australian schools. A few of these schools have made P4C central to their overall and ongoing culture. Most notably Buranda Primary School in Brisbane has become internationally renowned for its implementation of P4C, winning numerous educational awards (Hinton, 2003; Lindgard, et al., 2001 & 2003; Golding 2007).

There is a range of different names given to this worldwide tradition or movement that Lipman founded. Murris (1997) refers to the movement as ‘Philosophy with Children’ to emphasise the fact that it is philosophical dialogue with children. Burgh, Field and Freakley (2006) refer to ‘philosophy for children’ (without capitals) to distinguish the broader tradition from the IAPC materials which they refer to as ‘Philosophy for Children’ (with capitals). Splitter and Sharp (1995) do the opposite and use ‘Philosophy for Children’ to refer to the whole tradition. Throughout this thesis I will refer to this as ‘Philosophy for Children’ or ‘P4C’ in the way Splitter and Sharp do, to refer to a sub-discipline of philosophy and education “with its own history and traditions” (1995, vii). P4C includes and derives from, but is not limited to, the IAPC materials, is applicable to all young people including teenagers, is based on engaging young people in philosophical inquiry, and has its own distinctive pedagogy and approach to philosophy (to be discussed in section II and III).

II. The pedagogy of P4C

In this section I introduce the pedagogical foundation of P4C and so set the scene for investigating conceptions of philosophical progress for P4C. For this purpose I limit myself to describing P4C’s theory of teaching and learning and pointing out its similarities to other educational theories. Common to all P4C theory and teaching materials are: the Community of Inquiry (CI), a reflective or constructivist theory of learning, and also a social and dialogical theory of learning.

Community of Inquiry

The indispensable pedagogical method of P4C is to engage students in a philosophical CI, where they:

… actively engage in dialogue over topics of interest, in the service of constructing knowledge and common understanding, and internalising the discourse of the inquiring community (Pardales & Girod, 2006, 306).

This understanding of the CI has a distinguished lineage and links to other contemporary intellectual traditions.
The conception of the CI in P4C was explicitly developed from Peirce’s theory about how scientific knowledge is constructed by the community of scientific inquirers. Those in the scientific community use shared scientific methods to develop conclusions and results, and they are accountable to the community for the quality of what they produce. The community reviews the results to determine if they meet the required standards to be accepted. Likewise in P4C, students engage in philosophical inquiry in a CI using shared philosophical methods to develop suggestions and arguments and then put their philosophical ideas to the community to be tested and refined.

P4C’s conception of the CI also belongs in the same intellectual tradition as Gadamer and Habermas’s dialogue theories. In P4C, understanding and meaning emerge from dialogue in a similar way to the process of dialogue, negotiation, interpretation and ‘fusion of horizons’ described by Gadamer (1975; Kennedy, 1990). The CI also involves trust, respect, reciprocity and an equal opportunity to participate, making it similar to the ideal speech situation that Habermas (1972) argues is essential to dialogue.

The pedagogical praxis of the CI is also built on two other major theories of learning, which I discuss in the next two sub-sections. In P4C, learning is the result of a reflective process of inquiry and student construction, and also the result of the internalisation of social, dialogical interactions.

**A reflective or constructivist theory of learning**

P4C, and especially the inquiry aspect of the CI, is explicitly based on Dewey’s theory of reflective learning: learning occurs through a process of inquiry and knowledge is only acquired as the result of inquiry (for example, see Dewey, 1938, 8). Lipman puts it in this way:

To learn something well is to learn it afresh in the same spirit of discovery as that which prevailed when it was discovered or in the same spirit of invention as that which prevailed when it was invented (1988, 21).

On this basis, Lipman argues that P4C students should learn philosophy by doing it, not by learning about “the refined, finished end-products” of philosophical inquiry (2003, 20). They should follow the inquiry where it leads, rather than the teacher leading them to cover pre-decided positions, arguments, distinctions or concepts (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 25; Lipman, 2003, 22). They do this by starting with a philosophical issue that they personally experience as problematic. Then, by engaging in the same sort of inquiry that expert philosophers engage in (at a novice level), they resolve this problem and begin to develop the same sort of knowledge that philosophical experts develop.

P4C avoids presenting philosophy as a body of knowledge for students to consume (Cam, 2006b, 12). The pedagogical aim of P4C is to enable philosophical inquiry with children so they can learn to philosophise for themselves, not to passively pass on knowledge about who said what, when and why, or even what the major positions and arguments are. Standard philosophical text-books are thus avoided in P4C because they tend to present philosophy as “…the final end-product of the received or adult view of the discipline” (Lipman, 1988, 20-21). They present the results of expert philosophical thinking, inquiry and discovery and send the message that philosophy is something to learn about, rather than something students will do (Cam, 1995, 18). Reading such text-books does not enable a novice to learn to engage in philosophical inquiry or make philosophical discoveries for themselves.

This is not to say that P4C precludes students from engaging with positions and ideas from the philosophical tradition. Philosophical knowledge is presented as stimuli for further inquiry rather than as results to be learned about, and through inquiry, students make philosophical discoveries afresh.

Given this view of learning, P4C’s intellectual ancestors include not only Dewey, but also Rousseau who argued that students should discover for themselves rather than being told. Writing about *Emile*, Rousseau argues: “Let him not learn science, but discover it. If ever you substitute in his mind authority for reason, he will no longer reason” (1979, 168).

This reflective view of learning also places P4C within the constructivist tradition:
Learning is a constructive activity that the students themselves have to carry out. From this point of view, then, the task of the educator is not to dispense knowledge but to provide students with opportunities and incentives to build it up (von Glaserfeld, 2005, 3).

Both P4C and constructivism reject a mimetic view of teaching, or what Freire calls the banking concept of education (1993, 52-53), where knowledge is transmitted to passive students. Knowledge is not fixed and waiting to be discovered and it cannot be organised and imparted to students. Knowing requires the active transformation of old conceptions and the construction of new ones. What this means for P4C is that students must be involved in constructing and generating philosophical meaning and understanding because they cannot be passively given it, or find it, ready-made.¹

A social and dialogical theory of learning

P4C also falls in the tradition of social learning, which is explicitly integrated with reflective or inquiry learning as part of the Community of Inquiry. Learning philosophical thinking and inquiry requires social co-participation, negotiation and then internalisation.

P4C is overtly built on the social learning theories of Vygotsky and Mead. Mead argues that social imitation is the basic form of learning (Mead, 1993, 320). Vygotsky supports this in a quote that is often cited in the P4C literature:

> Every feature in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first between people (interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory and to the formation of concepts. All the higher psychological functions originate as actual relations between human individuals (1986, 57).

The implication for P4C is that thinking is not fundamentally private or in-the-head, but is a linguistic communication with others that has been internalised (Cam, 2006b, 18). As Lipman puts it, “thinking is the internalisation of dialogue” (1980, 23) and the way to learn how to think for oneself is to engage in dialogue or think with others (1980, 42-43). Through a process of internalisation, or what Dewey calls ‘experimental copying’ (1933, ch14, §1), children learn to think by taking what is spoken out loud in the CI and using it silently to address and guide themselves (Cam, 1995, 9-10).²

This process of social learning is explained well by educational psychologists McInerney & McInerney:

> Initially, children are subjected to public speech, which guides their behaviour (for example, the instructions given to them by their parents to perform particular behaviour). As children develop, they become more able to use their own speech (rather than the speech of others) to guide their behaviour and solve problems…. They instruct themselves about what they should do. In its initial stages, these instructions are aloud. As the child

¹ Although ‘constructivism’ is used in many different ways and has been associated with a range of problematic epistemological and metaphysical theories, in this thesis I refer only to what I take to be the uncontroversial heart of constructivism about learning and teaching: “all learning is constructed: understanding and evaluating new ideas and skills, even those of the most apparently rote character, requires reinterpreting them in light of one’s existing understandings and abilities” (Burbules, 2000b, 327). I distance myself from oversimplified or exaggerated views of constructivism, in particular views that knowledge is a mere construction. I say more about constructivism and P4C in chapter 2.

² Because of P4C’s combination of inquiry and social learning, it is compatible with both Vygotskian social constructivism and Piagetian personal, cognitive constructivism. Vygotskian social constructivism is the explicit basis for P4C’s community theory of learning. The inquiry learning of P4C is based explicitly on the Deweyan (1938, 105) theory of reflective learning - moving from experienced doubt to making things whole - which is very similar to Piagetian (1978) personal constructivism - moving from cognitive conflict to equilibrium. Thus P4C seems to take the position advocated by Cobb (2005) that both social and personal constructivism are essential for learning. Note that I am not arguing that P4C is compatible with the Piagetian stage theory of cognitive development which seems to imply that children do not have the cognitive capacity to do philosophy. This position is rejected by P4C, as I argue later in this chapter.
develops, this speech becomes increasingly quieter and subvocalised until eventually it is internalized and silent. At this stage, the child is using thought to control actions (2006, 61).

Thus, when learning to think philosophically, P4C students start by being asked such things as: “Why do you think that?” to which they are instructed to respond: “because …” Later, they internalise this speech and ask themselves “Why do I think that?” and respond to themselves “because …”

Because of this emphasis on social learning, P4C also belongs in the same tradition that includes situated learning in a “community of practice” (Wenger, 1988), and more specifically, learning by enculturation in a culture of thinking (Tishman, Jay & Perkins, 1993; Tishman, Perkins & Jay, 1995; Perkins, Jay & Tishman, 1993). P4C students are immersed or enculturated in philosophical dialogue where questions are asked, answers are suggested, examples and reasons are given, and rigorous inquiry is conducted, and they learn to think philosophically by internalising these dialogical practices.

III. The philosophical practice of P4C

In this section I locate P4C as one type of philosophical practice, which is intrinsically intertwined with the pedagogy of P4C just described. P4C is a programme of philosophical education, designed to be an alternative to academic philosophy that is suitable for children. It is a practice to be engaged in rather than a body of scholarship to master, it involves dialogical or collaborative philosophical inquiry, and it is inclusive and accessible to all. Although other philosophical practices may share some of these features, no other philosophical practice emphasises this particular mix of features. I discuss each of these features in the following sub-sections.

**Philosophical education**

P4C is a practice of philosophical education rather than a philosophical practice without educative aims, such as philosophical research or consultation. The aim of P4C is to use philosophy for educative purposes – most importantly to learn to be reasonable and to make sense of the world. For this reason, Lipman sometimes refers to the philosophy in P4C as “educational philosophy”, meaning “philosophy functioning educationally” (2004c, 6).

The philosophical education of P4C is intended to be suitable for children, and as such had to be different from academic philosophy. As Lipman explains:

> When I advocated philosophy in the schools, I was not talking about the tradition of academic philosophy taught in graduate schools of the university. What I was talking about was a philosophy redesigned and reconstructed so as to make it available and acceptable and enticing to children. Moreover the pedagogy by which the subject was to be presented would have to be just as drastically redesigned as the subject itself (Lipman, 1991, 262).

Brennifer explains what this reconstruction requires:

> … the common assumptions about philosophy need to be put aside, starting with its elitist and exclusively academic image as a particular ‘subject’. The object here is to think of philosophy in a different way: as a practice that invites all members of the public, whatever their personal level of education or their general knowledge, to engage in dialogue and reflection (2007, 180).

So the main way that the philosophical education of P4C is different from that of academic philosophy is that in P4C philosophy is a practice to participate in rather than to learn about. P4C students are to philosophise, not master a body of scholarship.

To clarify P4C’s approach to philosophical education, I present an illustration of what might occur in one practice of teaching academic philosophy and then an illustration of what might occur in a P4C
session where students are philosophising in a CI. To make comparison easier, both illustrations depict learning about the same philosophical topic, freedom. In the illustration of academic philosophy, students address sophisticated, scholarly problems and arguments about freedom, while in the P4C illustration, students raise their own problems and engage in inquiry to resolve these without addressing the scholarship.

**Box 2: Illustration of teaching academic philosophy**

Jenny’s first subject in philosophy is Metaphysics. She thinks she’s getting the hang of it, and is starting to understand some of the arguments, but she still struggles. The lecturer sometimes goes too fast and sometimes too slowly, but at least the notes give a handy outline to follow. She likes the way they set out the four important assumptions commonly made about freedom:

- We are free when we determine our own actions
- Freedom is incompatible with determinism
- We are determined
- We are free

She also likes how the notes clearly explain how the different traditional positions about freedom result from denying one of these assumptions while accepting the rest:

- If we deny assumption 2 we get compatibilism
- If we deny assumption 3 we get libertarianism
- If we deny assumption 4 and 1 we get hard determinism.

Jenny is not quite sure what compatibilism or libertarianism are, but she knows she has to write an essay about one of them that examines the arguments both for and against. She figures she will understand better once she has re-read the notes, attended the tutorial and reconsidered the positions and arguments.

In her tutorial Jenny gets a chance to discuss some of the issues about freedom.

“OK”, her tutor Geoff began, “What do you think freedom is?” Jenny was excited. She reckoned that freedom was doing whatever you wanted to, and said so.

“Good,” Geoff replied. “Now, how did you come to want the things you want?”

Jenny hadn’t thought this far, and she paused, frowning. But another student had a ready answer. “Well, you were born with certain desires, or you pick them up from your environment.”

“Ah-Ha!” Geoff exclaimed, “in other words you don’t choose your desires, because you are either born with them or you get them from your environment. But if you don’t choose what you want, how can you be free when you do what you want? Aren’t we controlled by our desires?”

Jenny found this confronting. “That can’t be right,” she claimed. “I know I make free choices every day.”

“But maybe the feeling that you’re free is an illusion,” Geoff countered. “This is what motivates the hard determinist position.”

Jenny was starting to change her mind. Maybe she was one of those hard determinists.

The main feature of this illustration of academic philosophy is the emphasis on mastering the arguments and positions from the philosophical tradition. To make them easier to understand, students are presented with these arguments and positions already organised into a logical structure. Because of this focus on the philosophical scholarship, even though there is student participation and dialogue in the

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3 Although I compare P4C to academic philosophy, as Lipman did in creating P4C, I do this to describe P4C, not to give an accurate portrayal of all academic philosophy. I do not claim that there is only one unified style of academic philosophy; that every style of philosophy employed at an academic level is completely different from P4C; that the methods of P4C could not be usefully employed in an academic setting; or that P4C is necessarily a better way of philosophising.
tutorial, this is very different from P4C. The tutor has a pre-decided agenda of positions and arguments, and only encourages discussion so that students can come to understand these. There is no opportunity for students to raise their own problems and the follow the resulting inquiry where it leads.

On the other hand, the philosophical practice of P4C involves participating in inclusive, collaborative, dialogical inquiry. It occurs within the structure of a Community of Inquiry where participating in philosophical inquiry is emphasised rather than learning about philosophical positions and arguments. The P4C teacher’s job is to help his/her students uncover philosophical problems in their own experience and then to help them follow the inquiry where it leads to resolve these problems, not to cover a pre-decided agenda from the philosophical scholarship.

In this illustration of the philosophical education of P4C, James’ class is pursuing their own inquiry rather than learning about what philosophers have said about freedom. In response to the story they
read, they raise philosophical problems and questions which are genuine problems for them. In their inquiry to resolve the problems, the students respond to each others’ ideas by building on and challenging them. They test their ideas by sharing them, asking questions and being asked questions in return. They do this to make progress together, rather than to attack and defend positions. Disagreements are occurring, yet these are not treated polemically, but as opportunities to help test the ideas. This is more inclusive than the assertive (and sometimes aggressive) intellectual environment that is sometimes associated with philosophy. This is also an example of collaborative philosophy because the thinking work is distributed throughout the class. Each student who contributes does only one part of the philosophical work: Amy suggests a view, Jill elaborates and John explores the implications of this view before James makes a conclusion. With guidance from their teacher, together they engage in philosophical inquiry. They follow the inquiry where it leads, rather than being led to understand predetermined outcomes taken from the philosophical scholarship.

**Philosophical practice**

The philosophical practice in P4C, illustrated in the previous sub-section, has three facets: 1) a particular subject matter to be inquired into; 2) a spirit or attitude of inquiry for approaching this subject matter; and 3) methods of thinking for approaching that content in that general spirit.  

1) **Subject matter:** The philosophical subject-matter of P4C is “unsettled, controversial issues that are so generic that no scientific discipline is equipped to deal with them” (Lipman, 1988, 91), and which are about “what is most fundamental in human experience” (Lipman, et al. 1980, 125). This includes:

- Common, central, contestable and challenging concepts such as truth, justice, beauty or the mind (Splitter, 2005; Splitter & Sharp, 1995)
- “Conceptual difficulties that lurk in the cracks and interstices of our conceptual schemes” (Lipman, 1988, 33), such as the relationship between truth and knowledge
- Philosophical questions about such concepts and difficulties such as, ‘Can we ever know the truth?’ or ‘What is beauty?’

Although the subject matter of academic philosophy includes a body of arguments and positions, this is not the subject matter addressed by P4C students. Instead they address the sort of philosophical problems and questions that led to the creation of the traditional arguments and positions.

2) **Spirit or attitude:** To approach this subject matter, P4C requires reasonable and open inquiry about philosophical problems. In other words, the general spirit of P4C is the search for deeper wisdom or meaning (Lipman, 1988; Splitter & Sharp, 1995).

The spirit of reasonableness in P4C involves more than being logical or rational and is closer to Siegel’s (1988, 2003) view of being “appropriately moved by reasons.” The reasonable person seeks reasons and explanations, expects them from others, and is willing to change their mind when given reason to do so.

The spirit of open inquiry also requires an attitude of fallibilism from P4C students. Because the problems of philosophy are controversial and complex, and resist final settlements, resolutions must be suggested with tentativeness and fallibility rather than with certainty or decisiveness (Lipman, 1988, 33). P4C students must be willing to go beyond what they take for granted, to uncover and critically examine their assumptions and to be unsettled (Lipman, 1988, 91).

3) **Ways of thinking:** To approach the problems of philosophy in a spirit of reasonable and open inquiry, P4C students need to engage in critical, creative and caring thinking (Lipman, 2003). More specifically, they must:

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4 See Gazzard (1996) for more on this tripartite categorisation of philosophy. Although P4C involves a particular philosophical subject matter, general spirit and way of thinking, there is some controversy about whether there should be a curriculum in P4C and if so which aspects of these should be included as curriculum outcomes. These issues have little bearing on the construction of a conception of philosophical progress in P4C, so I will not address them in this thesis.
… clarify meanings, uncover assumptions and presuppositions, analyse concepts, consider the validity of reasoning processes, and investigate the implications of ideas and the consequences in human life of holding certain ideas rather than others” (Lipman, et al., 1980, 108).

**Dialogical, collaborative philosophical inquiry**

The philosophical subject matter, spirit and ways of thinking of P4C can be summed up as a Deweyan-inspired approach to philosophy as a form of inquiry. P4C starts with the lived experience of the students and in particular the philosophical problems they experience. Students then engage with these problems in a process of philosophical inquiry that is shaped by these problems rather than by the philosophical scholarship. This is different from some academic philosophy where the main focus is polemical and where taking a position and considering arguments for and against this position is the most important task.

Dialogue is the primary mode of philosophical inquiry in P4C. This is partly because P4C belongs to the tradition of philosophy stemming from the practices of Socrates (which I discuss in more detail later), and partly because of the social learning theory on which P4C is founded. Philosophical dialogue in P4C involves engagement and exchange with others in a self-corrective inquiry (Lipman, 1988, 128) and is different from monological forms of philosophy: “the thinker meditating in solitude, or the professor holding forth to an audience” (Brennifer, 2007, 174). Dialogue is the means by which P4C students both engage in, and learn to engage in, philosophical inquiry.

Collaboration rather than intellectual sparring is essential to the dialogical philosophical practice of P4C. Students inquire together rather than argue for and against their individual positions. They are encouraged to be fallible and open with their critical scrutiny, rather than confrontational and polemical. Suggestions made are put forward as possibilities to be elaborated and tested in a spirit of partnership, joint inquiry, creativity and play with ideas, and not as positions to attack and defend.

**Inclusive**

P4C is also part of the inclusive philosophical tradition, stemming from the practices of Socrates, that makes philosophy available for everyone. This is a different tradition from that stemming from Plato’s academy that reserves philosophy for the mature, trained scholar. As Lipman says about P4C:

> The paradigm of doing philosophy is the towering, solitary figure of Socrates, for whom philosophy was neither an acquisition, nor a profession but a way of life. What Socrates models for us is not philosophy known or philosophy applied but philosophy *practised*. He challenges us to acknowledge that philosophy as deed, as form of life, is something that any of us can emulate (1988, 12).

Children can take part in the philosophical practice of P4C because it is inclusive in at least six ways:

1) P4C provides a safe mode of philosophising in a supportive and nurturing community. It is cooperative and collaborative, rather than competitive, and emphasises rigorous thinking and reasonableness while minimising the intellectual risks associated with more polemical styles of philosophy. P4C, in a similar way to feminist philosophy, offers an inclusive alternative to what is seen as the alienating, combative, adversarial, and exclusive practice of much academic philosophy (Moulton, 1983; Sharp, 1993; MacColl, 1994; Collins, 2000).

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5 Although informative, the analogy to Socratic philosophy can be taken too far. Much of Socratic practice, as depicted in Plato’s dialogues, seems inconsistent with the open dialogue advocated for P4C. The participants in Socratic dialogue philosophise rather than being taught about philosophy, but the overly directive model that Socrates sometimes adopts is not the model that P4C advocates. Socrates sometimes seems to be pushing an agenda rather than openly following the inquiry where it might lead. I say more about how P4C differs from Socratic philosophy in chapter 2 and chapter 8.
2) The language of philosophy employed in P4C is also inclusive. Philosophising in P4C is conducted in everyday language without the barriers posed by the “forbidding terminology” of scholarly traditions of philosophy (Reed, 1992a, 148-149). Children philosophise in P4C by doing such things as asking questions (Why …?), giving examples (An example is …), clarifying (I mean …), drawing implications (That means …), suggesting (I think …), and changing their minds (I now think …). Lipman argues that everyone who has the ability to speak can make these philosophical moves and so P4C is accessible to everyone in the community of speakers (1988, 194-195).

3) Just as P4C students do not need to master a technical language to philosophise, they also do not need to master the philosophical scholarship. P4C addresses problems and issues from the participants’ experience, so students do not need to learn about the problems and argument of academic philosophy before they can participate in philosophical inquiry.

4) P4C is also inclusive because students can participate even if they have not mastered philosophical thinking. Individual students can participate in the collaborative philosophical dialogue by listening or by performing only one of the many philosophical moves required for philosophical inquiry, because it is not so much the individual child who philosophises in P4C as it is the CI as a whole. With orchestration from the P4C teacher, all the various moves are performed, but each one is performed by a different member of the community. One might provide a suggestion, then another clarifies this suggestion, while two more provide a reason for and against. In this way a group of students who form a CI can operate philosophically even if no one student can do it all on their own (Murris, 2000, 263).

5) The inclusivity of P4C is also consistent with a Brunerian conception of philosophy. A Brunerian conception is that any child of any age can engage with any discipline, even the most complex and abstract, if that discipline is appropriately positioned (1960, 12-13). The implication is that P4C rejects the view that philosophy is so difficult and esoteric that only the mature and intelligent can handle it. Philosophy can be done in a sophisticated form with a high level of scholarship or at a novice level. Children can grasp philosophy in an intuitive and simple form and participate in novice level philosophical thinking, long before they can do the scholarly work of academic philosophy.

From a Brunerian perspective, P4C views children learning philosophy in the same way that most people view children learning mathematics. What goes on in academic mathematics departments is very sophisticated and specialised and beyond most children. However, this does not mean that when five year olds count rocks they are not doing mathematics. It may not be of the same sophistication or complexity but it is age appropriate mathematical thinking. Likewise even though children might not produce sophisticated essays and papers on contemporary philosophical issues, they can do philosophy. For example, although young children doing P4C would not write essays analysing the different positions and arguments about the traditional problem of free-will, they can and do converse “about philosophical topics in ordinary language disciplined by logical constraints” (Lipman, 1988, 143). For example, they consider how much freedom they have, listen to the suggestions of others, consider problems with their initial thoughts and modify their views in response.

Bruner’s idea of the spiral curriculum is particularly relevant for understanding how children philosophise at a novice level in P4C. Young children engage with basic philosophical ideas and use foundational philosophical thinking, and then revisit these over the years in more and more complex forms. For example, five year olds might think about what it means to be a friend in concrete terms, such as sharing your toys. They then come back to this concept in more and more sophisticated and abstract ways in later years by considering the connections between friendship and trust, integrity, 

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6 Kitchener (1990) argues that children cannot do philosophy because it is too complex for them. However, many of these arguments do not apply to the philosophical practice of P4C. At best, they can only show that children cannot engage with exclusive, scholarly, academic philosophy. See Murris (2000) for an overview of the case that children can do philosophy when philosophy is appropriately reconstructed, pitched at the right level, and made inclusive as it is in P4C.
happiness and living a good life, and by using more sophisticated tools of philosophy, such as giving and evaluating reasons or making distinctions.

Even if we take the exclusive position that only the most rigorous inquiry done in universities counts as real philosophy, we should acknowledge that there is a developmental process to philosophical thinking. This starts with very young children learning to state their beliefs on philosophical issues such as friendship, and giving reasons in support (“I think friends should always share because it’s mean to not share and friends are not mean to each other”). This is a necessary developmental stage before they can learn to state and evaluate arguments for and against, say, a Platonic position on friendship. But if we admit that there is such a developmental process, it seems unnecessary to withhold the name ‘philosophy’ from what children do during this developmental process. Children doing P4C are obviously not academic philosophers yet they are philosophising.

6) P4C is also inclusive because it holds that children can be more capable thinkers than they are typically given credit for. In other words, P4C rejects the Piagetian position that children are incapable of philosophical thinking.

A common interpretation of Piagetian theory is that children go through fixed, age-based stages of cognitive development, from simple and concrete to complex and abstract, and that they cannot think in the patterns of higher stages. This is often thought to imply that children are inherently unable to handle the abstract complexity of philosophy, because they have not reached the adult stage of abstract reasoning.

P4C rejects this interpretation, because even if untrained children are unable to do academic philosophy, trained children can participate in the philosophical practice of P4C. There is ample evidence that children are able to philosophise when they have had the opportunity, experience, and training in a philosophical CI. For instance, Matthews (1978, 1980, 1984) provides a wide variety of examples of young children engaging in complex and abstract philosophical dialogue and exploration.

Modern neo-Piagetians take a similar position to P4C about the cognitive capacity of children. Cognitive acceleration theorists agree with Piaget that there are stages of thinking that humans go through in their normal development, and that early, concrete stages of thinking cannot support philosophical thinking. Yet they present evidence that even if children ‘naturally’ start at a lower stage of cognitive development, they can be ‘accelerated’ to higher, abstract stages (Adey & Shayer, 2002; Shayer, 1997). If children are confronted with the right cognitive challenge, and have a supportive environment in which to develop, they can learn to engage in the abstract thought necessary for philosophy. P4C provides just such a challenge and just such a supportive environment.

**Summary of the praxis of Philosophy for Children**

In this sub-section I summarise the praxis of P4C described in sections II and III. My aim in the thesis is to provide a conception of philosophical progress that will be efficacious for this praxis.

P4C is a programme of philosophical education based on a reflective/constructivist, and a social/dialogue theory of learning, or in other words, based on immersing students in a philosophical Community of Inquiry where they learn to inquire philosophically by participating in philosophical inquiry. In line with this, the philosophical practice of P4C involves dialogical, collaborative inquiry about philosophical problems and questions that arise in the experience of students. This philosophical practice is inclusive and accessible to children. P4C students are initiated into a practice of philosophical inquiry that is appropriate for them, rather than being initiated into the scholarly practice of academic philosophy, or being taught the subject philosophy. They can participate in P4C because they inquire in ordinary language, in a safe, supportive dialogue, about problems from their own experience, and there is no barrier posed by convoluted texts, or lengthy periods of training and apprenticeship. With support and challenge from their peers and their teacher, they can develop the cognitive skills they need, and because the philosophical work is distributed, individual students can participate, even without extensive experience.
IV. Epistemic philosophical progress

Given my concern in this thesis is philosophical progress in P4C, I next need to explain what I mean by ‘philosophical progress’. In this section I locate philosophical progress as a type of epistemic progress, which is a type of progress with ideas. I first describe what progress is, then how progress with ideas is different from other kinds of progress, and thirdly how epistemic progress is different from other types of progress with ideas. I can then describe what epistemic philosophical progress is and how it is different from other types of philosophical progress.

Progress

Progress implies both change and improvement. If things remain static there can be no progress, but change without improvement is not progress. As von Wright puts it: “Progress is change for the better, regress is change for the worse” (1997, 1). Alternatively, Prawitz suggests that: “Progress occurs when something has improved i.e. when one state of affairs is followed in time by a second state that is better or more valuable than the first one” (1997, 139).

Progress with ideas

There are various types of change and improvement such as becoming more skilful, getting a higher income, or renovating a house. Philosophical progress involves a specific kind which I call progress with ideas, or getting better or more valuable conceptions, answers, propositions or judgements. I discuss two important types of progress with ideas, historical and psychological, and then distinguish these from epistemic progress which is the type that I am interested in.

Historical Progress: Historical progress with ideas involves the historical improvement of knowledge. Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) presents what is probably the most famous example of a view of historical progress. Hegel argues that knowledge progresses dialectically, and does so inevitably towards universal world spirit or perfect knowledge. Nisbett (1980) also surveys a wide variety of different conceptions of the historical progress of human knowledge. This thesis will not study the historical progress of ideas, nor the historical development of philosophical knowledge. Whether our present philosophical ideas are better than those of the past will be left an open question.

Psychological Progress: Psychological progress, often called psychological development, involves the psychological improvement of an individual’s cognitive and moral ideas, often called stages or positions. Piaget’s (1978) theory of cognitive development and Kohlberg’s (1981) theory of moral development are paradigmatic examples. This thesis is not concerned with progress as a phenomenon of psychological development, and it will not attempt to describe individual philosophical development.

Epistemic Progress: Epistemic progress involves the epistemic improvement of ideas. It describes a logical or conceptual relationship, and provides the criteria by which we can judge whether historical or psychological progress has occurred. This is the type of progress with ideas that I am concerned with in studying philosophical progress. Rather than just describing how our ideas change historically or psychologically, this thesis addresses the issue of what it means to have an improvement in ideas.

When I use the term ‘epistemic progress’, I employ a broad conception of epistemology. A standard definition of epistemology is that it is the study of the nature, extent, sources, limits and legitimacy of knowledge (Klein, 2005, 224; Pappas, 2005, 227). The conception of epistemology I use is not restricted to the theory of knowledge but includes a theory of understanding in all its modes. Thus I use the term ‘epistemology’ to refer to the study of the nature, extent, sources, limits and legitimacy of such things as beliefs, understandings, judgements and theories, and so epistemic progress is the study of what it means for one belief, understanding, justification or theory to be an improvement over another.

Epistemic philosophical progress

The philosophical progress I am concerned with in this thesis is the epistemic progress of philosophical ideas (which should be distinguished from other types of epistemic progress such as mathematical
progress of mathematical ideas). Epistemic philosophical progress occurs when we produce epistemically better answers, solutions and ideas about philosophical problems and issues. A conception of epistemic philosophical progress explains what makes one philosophical idea better than another and gives criteria we can use to judge whether philosophical progress has been made.

My aim in this thesis is to develop a conception of epistemic philosophical progress for P4C. This must explain what it means to make philosophical progress, how to make philosophical progress, and how to judge we have made philosophical progress in the context of the philosophical education of P4C.

I finish this section by distinguishing epistemic philosophical progress from four other forms of philosophical progress that are often confused in the P4C and the wider philosophy literature:

Progress of the discipline of philosophy: This thesis will not study the progress of philosophy itself, the achievements of the discipline of philosophy, nor whether the discipline is improving, as these are primarily concerns about the historical progress of philosophy. Instead, this thesis is concerned with what makes one philosophical conception better than another (which could be used to judge whether the discipline has made progress).

Progress by achieving the benefits of philosophy: Although philosophy produces a range of products, achievements and benefits, many of these do not involve epistemic philosophical progress in the sense I use the term. For example, as argued in Philosophy: A School of Freedom (UNESCO, 2007), philosophy makes people and society better by improving thinking skills, which assists us in being free and independent reasoners, and better democratic citizens, which in turn leads to progress towards a better society. Philosophy also produces well-crafted and innovative literary works such as the Platonic dialogues, Nietzsche’s aphorisms or Descartes’ meditations. For the purpose of this thesis I do not classify these as examples of epistemic philosophical progress, and am only concerned with the progress by getting better philosophical conceptions or ideas.

Progress in mastering the discipline of philosophy: I also distinguish epistemic philosophical progress from someone getting better at the discipline of philosophy. The concern of this thesis is what counts as a better philosophical idea and how we judge whether a better philosophical idea has been produced. This is different from what counts as a student mastering philosophy, getting better at philosophical thinking or becoming more philosophical.

Progress in having a better philosophical discussion: Lastly I distinguish epistemic philosophical progress from having better philosophical discussions. Getting a better philosophical idea is not the same as getting better at taking turns, building on ideas and sticking to the philosophical point. Making epistemic philosophical progress may be easier if we have better philosophical discussions, but nevertheless my focus is the conception of what makes one philosophical idea better than another.

V. The problem of philosophical progress in Philosophy for Children

There are two major impediments to developing a conception of epistemic philosophical progress for P4C. They make epistemic philosophical progress difficult to conceptualise, and so lead to numerous misconceptions that are problematic for P4C.

First, because philosophy does not seem to produce definite answers it is difficult to understand what philosophical progress might be. In some disciplines, a conception of progress is relatively straightforward because of a high degree of expert agreement about appropriate methods and

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7 Much of the literature on philosophical progress is about the historical development of the discipline (although there is little literature about philosophical progress of any kind). The few articles written about progress in philosophy that I have found are: Lovejoy, 1917a, 1917b; Urban, 1926; Quine, 1970; Rapaport, 1982; Moody, 1986; Neilsen, 1987; Dombrowski, 1994; and Campbell, 2003. Various books also refer to philosophical progress when they address metaphilosophical issues, such as Nelson (1962), Rorty (1998), and Rescher (1985, 2006), but these are as infrequent as the papers.
established findings. However, philosophical progress, whatever it might turn out to be, cannot be so straightforward. There is no consensus about appropriate philosophical method that can be relied on to settle questions of philosophical progress and instead of established findings, there are multiple conflicting interpretations, arguments and positions, and widespread disagreement and debate.

Second, it is also difficult to understand what philosophical progress in P4C might be because P4C involves open inquiry without a pre-decided agenda. How do we know we are getting anywhere when we do not have a pre-determined conclusion to aim for or judge progress against? Splitter and Sharp elaborate on this problem:

Does the community of inquiry make any real progress if the process of the inquiry itself is an endless construction? Is the community of inquiry condemned to relativism and endless self-correction? After all, it might be said, we are advocating a process which is governed by the views and interests of its participants, a process which rarely claims to reach a final conclusion (1995, 25).

In the face of the controversial nature of philosophy and the open-ended inquiry of P4C, students and teachers adopt incongruous and inadequate misconceptions of philosophical inquiry and philosophical progress. This results in a number of problems for the practice of P4C and I argue that a clear conception of philosophical progress is needed to resolve them. I illustrate these problems in the following discussion about the question ‘What is racism?’ These problems are unlikely to all occur in one P4C session as I have presented them, but nevertheless, they are all commonly observed in P4C.

**Box 4: Illustration of the problem of philosophical progress for P4C**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student 1</th>
<th>Racism is treating Chinese or Indigenous people badly.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
<td>Yeah, but everyone is treated badly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 3</td>
<td>Some races have had it really bad though – you know, like slavery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 4</td>
<td>I’d hate to be a slave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 5</td>
<td>I reckon my Mum treats me like a slave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 6</td>
<td>I bet I have more work to do at home than you do …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 7</td>
<td>Someone said calling white people “whitey” is racist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 1</td>
<td>You’re all wrong. Like I said, racism is when a minority is treated badly. Racism is only if you think that, you know, African-Americans are dumb and so they don’t give them a job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 3</td>
<td>We’ve already said that. We’re just going around in circles and I’m lost.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>So what is racism then?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 4</td>
<td>I reckon it’s when all people from a race are treated the same.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 1</td>
<td>No, that’s not right either. It has to be bad treatment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
<td>What about the scientists? They must have discovered what racism is.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 8</td>
<td>We could do a survey to find out …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 5</td>
<td>I remember reading something about it being racist to make fun of other races.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
<td>‘Making fun’ isn’t right. It’s more serious than that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 1</td>
<td>That’s just semantics. I don’t care what anyone else says, racism is treating a race badly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 4</td>
<td>We can’t figure this out miss. Why don’t you just tell us the answer?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>No, you’re doing fine. Don’t forget there are no right and wrong answers in philosophy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 9</td>
<td>Well, I reckon the answer just depends on whose opinion you ask.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 6</td>
<td>Yeah. Whatever you think is the right answer for you.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The students in this illustration do not make epistemic philosophical progress, and neither they nor their teacher seem to be aware that their progress is impeded. This illustrates an insidious problem for P4C because the discussion can mistakenly appear to be unproblematic, and in places it may even seem to involve good philosophy teaching, or just good teaching.

My diagnosis is that neither the teacher nor students in the illustration have a clear conception of philosophical progress. Although they were discussing a philosophical question (and P4C students may even fail to do this) they did not treat this question philosophically and seem to misunderstand the philosophical character of the issues involved. They also do not seem to understand the nature of philosophical inquiry and thus how philosophical progress is different from, for example, what happens in science or mathematics. Neither teacher nor students realise the importance of evaluation, reasoning and argumentation for answering philosophical questions and instead students suggest methods more suitable for the issues investigated by other disciplines, such as taking a survey.

Multiple answers are suggested in the illustration but students are not sure what to make of them. Some students try to prove one suggestion is right, but because they fail to present convincing arguments, others think that no progress can be made. At times students seem to think that they make philosophical progress by swapping opinions and saying whatever they like, rather than getting to the bottom of an issue through reasoning and argumentation. At other times they seem to think that we can resolve
philosophical issues by appealing to an inappropriate epistemic authority. In this case they tried the dictionary, but in other cases they might appeal to expert opinion or ‘the facts’. They cannot understand why there is so much disagreement and discussion when they should just be able to get the right answer and move on. Even when potentially useful suggestions are made, such as student 4’s suggested definition early in the illustration, these are generally disregarded as merely one opinion among many, and are not given the consideration due to a suggestion that may lead to progress. In general, students do not see a clear and simple path forward and so decide there is no path.

The first half of this discussion is unstructured and makes no progress because the teacher allows students to say whatever they like (“there are no right and wrong answers in philosophy”). The ‘philosophy’ is merely a shallow exchange of opinion, without critical examination or evaluation. The P4C teacher does nothing to encourage productive inquiry and instead they allow students 4, 5 and 6, to make irrelevant suggestions and student 1 to dominate the group. Student 1 jumps to a conclusion and rejects any further inquiry because they see no value in continuing the discussion once they have given what they consider to be the right answer. The other students offer suggestions according to the ‘logic’ of stream-of-consciousness rather than that of philosophical inquiry. They wander aimlessly because they lack teacher guidance and they have no conception of what a philosophical inquiry is or how to follow one. This problem can be magnified in some P4C classes where P4C teachers, on the pretext of encouraging safety and empathy, give exaggerated praise to every comment while ignoring all sorts of logical error, ambiguity, imprecision and unsupported claims.

It is also possible to impede progress with the opposite sort of discussion which is overly argumentative and polemical. Even if students were intellectually robust enough to participate in such a challenging intellectual environment (which is unlikely for most), they would get stuck testing and evaluating views and would be unable to progress further by suggesting or elaborating new ideas.

In the second half of the discussion, after student 7 suggests they would be better off just reading the dictionary, the discussion seems to get somewhere, but only because the teacher controls it, simplifies the issues and ignores possible disagreements and complexities. This is problematic not only because the teacher has taken control of the discussion, but also because the teacher implies that there is a ‘right’ philosophical answer, and they direct students towards this answer. There is ‘progress’ in the sense of being inculcated into the position that the teacher has decided is correct but this is not the independent student progress needed in P4C, where students follow the inquiry where it leads.

In summary, lack of a conception of philosophical progress leaves P4C students and teachers intellectually lost. Without it they have numerous misunderstandings about what philosophical progress is and how to achieve it, and this leaves them unable to navigate the controversial paths of philosophical inquiry in P4C.

VI. The rationale for addressing the problem

In this section I elaborate my rationale for addressing the problem of philosophical progress in P4C which I have just illustrated. Because P4C students are intended to make philosophical progress, P4C needs a conception of what philosophical progress is and how to achieve it. Yet, there is currently no clear and comprehensive account given in the P4C literature. So the aim of this thesis is to develop and present this needed conception.

Making philosophical progress is an essential epistemic aim of P4C. But without a conception of philosophical progress, P4C is plagued by a number of problems that impede the realisation of this aim, as illustrated in the previous section. So, there needs to be a conception of philosophical progress in P4C to enable students to find their way forward in philosophical inquiry and to make progress.

Yet there is no adequate account of epistemic philosophical progress in the P4C literature. Many P4C writers say a great deal about the pedagogical issues of how to develop philosophical skills, processes and attitudes and how to create a successful philosophy discussion, but there is little consideration given
to what philosophical progress is, how students can make progress, and how to recognise it when it occurs. For example, it is common to discuss how to set up a Community of Inquiry (CI) as the pedagogical structure to support quality philosophical dialogue and inquiry in P4C, but there are only scattered allusions to what ‘philosophical progress’ within the CI might be.

Even though the point of P4C is for students to be initiated into the practice of philosophical inquiry, none of the P4C texts provide adequate standards of excellence by which to judge performance in this practice. Standards of procedural excellence are commonly provided by specifying what counts as a good discussion and good thinking, but there are no standards of epistemic excellence with which to measure the quality of philosophical outcomes, or in other words, no standards of epistemic philosophical progress.

When P4C commentators do address the issue of philosophical progress, the conceptions presented tend to be too vague. For example, it is suggested that we make philosophical progress by making sense of things that matter (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 65) or making meaning (Lipman, et al., 1980, 16). This vague process is elaborated metaphorically as following the inquiry where it leads, but while this is suggestive, it is not yet a satisfactory conception of philosophical progress.

Lipman also makes statements about progress in P4C that are not so metaphorical but which are still insufficiently concrete to form an adequate conception of philosophical progress:

> A good discussion occurs in any subject when the net result or outcome of the discussion is discerned as marking a definite progress as contrasted with the conditions that existed when the episode began. Perhaps it is progress in understanding; perhaps it is progress in arriving at some sort of consensus; perhaps it is progress only in the sense of formulating the problem – but in any case, there is a sense of forward movement having taken place. Something has been accomplished; a group product has been achieved (Lipman, et al., 1980, 111).

If P4C teachers were all philosophically expert with a tacit understanding of philosophical progress then the advice to “follow the argument where it leads” and to accomplish something philosophical, might be all they need to guide P4C classes to make philosophical progress. But P4C teachers tend to be philosophical novices and have no understanding, tacit or otherwise, of philosophical progress. Even if they do have a tacit understanding, there needs to be an explicit and detailed conception of philosophical progress for P4C that can be used to scaffold students to make and judge philosophical progress. My project is to build on what has been suggested about philosophical progress in P4C to create a more comprehensive conception that can be used to understand and promote philosophical progress in the P4C classroom.

Although I have presented the lack of an adequate conception of philosophical progress as if it is a fault of the P4C literature, this lack is better understood as an example of almost inescapable pitfall facing many school-based educational programmes. The bulk of the P4C literature is aimed at professional teachers who are novices at philosophical education and philosophy. As such, the philosophical praxis of P4C is described in simple terms so that novices can make sense of it and implement it with children. This appropriately simplified praxis cannot address every sophisticated issue relevant to the praxis, and so it does not present an adequate conception of epistemic philosophical progress. This problem is exacerbated because teachers tend to mistake the simplified novice conceptions from the literature for the comprehensive, expert conceptions they should aspire to, and when they apply these novice conceptions they think they have mastered teaching P4C without even realising the limits of their practice. In light of this, my aim is to give a theoretically sophisticated conception of philosophical progress that P4C practitioners can aspire to, without losing contact with the practicalities of classroom inquiry with children.

Constructing a conception of philosophical progress for P4C will also extend my personal long-term project of supporting, teaching and promoting P4C. My involvement in P4C began in 1992 while
completing a MA in Philosophy at the University of Auckland. Since then I have taught philosophy in many schools throughout New Zealand and have been the Philosopher in Residence in some. In 1999 I was one of the co-founders, and first coordinator, of the New Zealand Philosophy for Children association (P4CNZ). Now I am one of a small group of educators in Australasia who are certified by the Federation of Australasian Philosophy in Schools Associations (FAPSA) to train teachers and teacher educators in P4C. I train teachers and teacher educators, and assist schools, galleries, museums and zoos in Australia, New Zealand and Singapore to teach philosophically. Since 2004, I have also been teaching and coordinating a P4C subject at The University of Melbourne Graduate School of Education. I thus have a personal and professional interest in improving the praxis of P4C by creating a new conception of philosophical progress.

VII. Philosophical methods

To resolve the problems I diagnosed in Section V, I argue that I need to employ philosophical rather than empirical methods, and in particular, these methods should be pragmatist, normative, creative and rooted in practice rather than polemical, descriptive and analytic. This section will outline and justify these philosophical methods.

To paraphrase Collingwood from the quote at the beginning of this chapter, to understand a philosophical approach, it is necessary to understand the problem being addressed. The problem addressed in this thesis is the impediments to progress in the educational practice of P4C that result from P4C practitioners’ and students’ inadequate conceptions of philosophical progress. If a reader mistakenly thought I intended to deal with abstract or universal problems about the nature and meaning of education, the problems I discuss might sometimes seem like straw men, but they are not. The problems I address are the conceptions and misconceptions that P4C teachers and students have, here and now, and how these impede the possibility of philosophical progress in P4C.

Philosophical not empirical

To resolve these problems I need to develop a new conception of philosophical progress. While empirical evidence is relevant, no matter how much information is gathered, this will not produce a conception or show that the new conception should be adopted by P4C. Conceptual and normative research is required for these tasks, so a philosophical method, rather than an empirical one, is more appropriate. Therefore, rather than trying to discover new facts or provide accurate information, this thesis will employ philosophical methods to develop, clarify and illuminate the conception of ‘epistemic philosophical progress’. If empirical research is the “gathering and analysis of data regarding current practice in light of theory” (Blake, et al., 2003, 14), the philosophical research in this thesis can be seen as analysing, evaluating and reconceptualising theory in the light of current practice and data.

Pragmatist bricolage

The philosophical method employed is pragmatist. The general method for pragmatist research, following Dewey, is inquiry that starts with a problem and ends with a resolution to this problem. Constructing a resolution is not the same as arguing for a position, which makes the philosophical pragmatism I employ different from a polemical method of philosophy. I start with a problem, not a position or argument, and then I attempt to construct a viable resolution to this problem, rather than to hold and defend a position. Note also, that I am only advocating a pragmatist method of philosophical inquiry here. Whether a pragmatist conclusion will result remains to be seen.

I use philosophical pragmatism in order to resolve the problems in the current ways of conceptualising philosophical progress in P4C. I am not attempting to find a ‘true’ conception of philosophical progress or what Biesta and Burbules (2003, ch1) term “a correct description of an external and independent reality”. As such, the resolutions I present should be judged by how well they resolve the problems in the praxis of P4C, not by whether they are ‘true’, or whether they resolve every possible problem. The
resolutions I develop may also solve problems for future practitioners, and for practitioners outside of Philosophy for Children (as I will argue in chapter 9 when I discuss the implications of the conception I develop), but I am not attempting to create a resolution that has universal applicability.

This method might be described as pragmatist bricolage. I use ‘bricolage’ as Brandon (2004) does, to describe the practice of devising and using conceptions that are accurate enough for their intended function, where more accurate, precise or comprehensive conceptions would be unwieldy, or overly complex for this function. This is different from how Levi-Strauss (1966) uses ‘bricolage’ to describe an inferior practice of making do with whatever is at hand. The bricoleur in my sense is not restricted to what is already at hand and can fashion new conceptions, but the conceptions they are interested in are those that are good enough to be efficacious in the current situation, rather than conceptions that will work in all situations for all people. For example, engineers commonly take a bricolage approach, employing Newtonian physics because it is precise and rigorous enough to enable them to build bridges without the excessive complications involved with using a more universally accurate physics.

For this thesis, there are two types of conceptions that I seek as a philosophical bricoleur:

- Aspirational conceptions about philosophical progress that, if adopted, will enable P4C teachers and students to understand, make and evaluate philosophical progress.
- Pedagogical conceptions to scaffold students to understand and adopt the aspirational conceptions of philosophical progress.

In summary, my aim is to provide conceptions that P4C practitioners can use to resolve the problems they face and thereby improve their P4C practice. I will argue that these conceptions are efficacious, not that they solve every possible philosophical issue, or that they will apply to all people in all situations.

**Normative, creative and rooted in practice**

Although I am primarily engaged in conceptual work, the philosophical method I employ is also normative, not just descriptive, and will go beyond analytic conceptual analysis. I do not take a restricted view of philosophy as the ‘conceptual underlabourer’ that clears the ground of ambiguity and incoherence. The aim of my research is to construct a new and improved conception of philosophical progress, rather than to merely analyse, describe and ‘tidy up’ the conception we already have.

This normative philosophical approach might be called pragmatist conceptual analysis. I am not analysing what the concept ‘progress’ means in the sense of how it is currently used. My aim is to uncover or create a conception (not merely a ‘concept’) that will be effective for resolving problems in P4C, or as Goodman puts it, a conception that has efficacy in world-making and understanding:

> In such a context, I am not so much stating a belief or advancing a thesis or a doctrine as proposing a categorisation or scheme of organisation, calling attention to a way of setting our nets to capture what may be significant likenesses and differences. Argument for the categorisation, the scheme, suggested could not be for its truth, since it has no truth-value, but for its efficacy in world-making and understanding. An argument would consist rather of calling attention to important parallels … of pointing out obscurities and confusions that are clarified by this association, of showing how this organization works with other aspects of the theory…. For a categorical system, what needs to be shown is not that it is true but what it can do. Put crassly, what is called for in such cases is less like arguing than selling (1978, 129).

D’Agostino (2003) also clearly explains the approach I take. The aim is to:

- design a tool for use by certain kinds of agents to accomplish certain kinds of purposes, in a certain kind of environment, and our problem is one of practical functional design, not conceptual analysis or metaphysical speculation about the Good or the Right.

My method of pragmatist conceptual analysis is to devise a conception of epistemic philosophical progress that can be employed by P4C teachers and students in order to understand and make
philosophical progress, and which will be efficacious in the context of P4C, taking into account the pre-existing understandings and conceptions of P4C teachers and students.

Nor is my pragmatist conceptual analysis to be a kind of detached analysis, or the result of ivory tower scholarship and thought. It has its roots in my experience as a P4C teacher and teacher educator and in my observations of P4C students. This is not merely an analysis of theory, but an attempt to improve practice, that is rooted in that practice.

My philosophical method is also creative and not merely critical, analytic and argumentative. I stress building conceptions rather than arguing for and against them, so philosophical exploration and creation is more important than the argument-objection-reply pattern. I do engage in argumentation, but it is from a pragmatist perspective where I argue that a conception of philosophical progress does resolve the problems I have identified in the context of P4C, and thus is an efficacious conception for P4C.

In summary, my aim is to use philosophical methods to develop conceptions and ideas, theories and meanings about philosophical progress that effectively resolve the problems that arise in the practice of P4C. To borrow a phrase from Sellars (1963, 1) and Wittgenstein (1991, 1.123) from philosophy and Perkins from education (1995, ch10), the measure of success is whether the conception of philosophical progress I offer enables practitioners to find their way around the practice of P4C without becoming entangled in the problems I have identified.

VIII. The structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into three. The first part describes P4C in detail. This sets the scene for part 2 and the development of a conception of philosophical progress for P4C, which I summarise in the third part.

Part 1: Philosophy for Children

The Community of Inquiry (CI) is the context for learning, teaching and dialogue, and hence progress, in P4C. So, in chapter 2 I focus on this central feature of P4C. I discuss the nature of the CI, the role the teacher has, as well as how the CI differs from other similar constructivist discussion-based pedagogies. My description of the CI from chapter 2 highlights the absence of an adequate conception of epistemic philosophical progress for P4C, but it also isolates the seed from which such a conception could be cultivated: philosophical progress is made by following the inquiry where it leads. I examine this seed in Chapter 3. Students make philosophical progress in a pragmatist sense, by pursuing an inquiry from meaningless conceptions to meaningful ones. When their conceptions do not ‘work’ this impels students to inquire and they make progress by developing meaningful conceptions that do ‘work’.

I finish part 1 by arguing that ‘following the inquiry where it leads’ is not yet an adequate conception of philosophical progress for P4C. In particular, the following questions need further investigation: What is the distinctive about following a philosophical inquiry where it leads? Where does philosophical inquiry start? How does philosophical inquiry proceed? How do we judge what to do next to make progress in philosophical inquiry? How do P4C students and teachers typically conceive of progress in P4C, and why do these conceptions typically impede philosophical progress? How do we judge that we have made philosophical progress? How do P4C students learn to follow a philosophical inquiry where it leads and how can P4C teachers educate for this?

Part 2: A new conception of philosophical progress for Philosophy for Children

In this part of the thesis I develop an innovative and comprehensive conception of philosophical progress for P4C to fill the gap exposed in part 1. Each chapter elaborates the conception of philosophical progress by addressing one of the questions raised at the end of part 1.

In Chapter 4 I develop the core of my conception of philosophical progress: the problem-resolution conception of philosophy. Even though philosophy does not produce lasting, definitive conclusions, we can make philosophical progress by following the inquiry where it leads from philosophical problem to
philosophical resolution. We resolve philosophical problems, and hence make progress, not by reaching definitive conclusions, but by developing new conceptions that transform the incongruous and inadequate conceptions we started with so they are now congruent and adequate.

The problem-resolution conception is similar to Nicholas Rescher’s pluralist metaphilosophy, and connects a reconception of philosophy, in the spirit of Nelson Goodman, with a Deweyan conception of philosophical inquiry. This conception allows me to be more specific about the nature and direction of philosophical progress in P4C and to distinguish this from epistemic progress in other disciplines.

Despite being an improvement over ‘following the inquiry where it leads’, the problem-resolution conception alone is not enough for an adequate conception of philosophical progress in P4C. It also needs to be supplemented with detailed conceptions of: how to identify philosophical problems; the nature of philosophical inquiry; the complex epistemic positions that P4C teachers and students need to take about the nature of philosophical progress; and, how to educate for philosophical progress. I discuss and develop each of these conceptions in chapters 5 to 8.

To make philosophical progress P4C students must first identify and articulate problems that they can resolve. Yet this is often difficult to do and they need scaffolding. In Chapter 5 I present a conception of philosophical questions that, I argue, provides this needed scaffolding. It can assist P4C students to identify fruitful philosophical problems and formulate them as questions, which, if taken as the starting point for inquiry, will be likely to lead to philosophical progress.

P4C students will also need guidance so they can keep on track and judge that they are making progress as they move from articulated problem to resolution. In Chapter 6 I extend Lipman’s account of philosophical inquiry so it can be used as a heuristic and propaedeutic framework to provide this guidance. I argue that this extended conception will enable students to keep their bearings as they move from philosophical problems to philosophical resolutions, and to identify milestones that indicate they are making progress.

In Chapter 7, based on the analysis of ‘personal epistemic positions’ by Perry, Paul, Kuhn and Daniel, I argue that taking a complex epistemic position is as important for making philosophical progress as is complex thinking and a CI. If P4C teachers or students take simple epistemic positions, such as ‘philosophical resolutions are either right or wrong’, or ‘they are all a matter of opinion’, then this will impede the possibility of philosophical progress. To make philosophical progress, I argue, P4C teachers and students should take a position of reasoned evaluationism where philosophical resolutions are taken to be inter-subjective reflective judgements. These judgements are not mere opinions, but nor can they be said to be ‘right’ or ‘wrong’. Instead they are better or worse depending on how well reasoned and reasonable they are.

In the penultimate chapter I examine the role P4C teachers should play in educating for philosophical progress. Drawing on rich conceptions of knowledge, of autonomy and of social and indirect theories of teaching and learning from theorists such as Vygotsky, Biesta, Smeyers, Burbules, Saloman and Perkins, I argue that P4C students can learn to make philosophical progress in P4C by participating in philosophical co-inquiry and exploration with their teacher. However, even if P4C teachers understand this theoretical conception it is still difficult for them to find the balance between: 1) controlling the inquiry so it makes progress which prevents students from learning to make progress for themselves, and 2) allowing students free rein where they are unable to progress on their own. I argue that this practical problem can be solved if P4C teachers have a conception or stance to guide their practice. Building on a conception of teaching-as-guiding from Burbules, I argue that P4C teachers should take the stance of an expedition-educator. They should educate for philosophical progress by guiding students to make progress during co-inquiry, rather than leading them to follow the teacher’s agenda.

**Part 3: Resolutions**

In the final part of the thesis I present my resolutions to the problems of philosophical progress in P4C, and conclude the thesis.
In Chapter 9 I summarise the various problems I have addressed and how I have resolved them with the various facets of the conception of epistemic philosophical progress. I give an explicit answer to my research question: *What conception of philosophical progress would be efficacious for Philosophy for Children?* I also illustrate making philosophical progress in P4C, just as I illustrated the problems in this chapter. Finally, I consider further implications of the conception of philosophical progress: Whenever students deal with issues where knowledge is problematic, or not settled, and where there are no obvious right or wrong answers, such as when reflective thinking is an educational goal, this conception will be useful to enable students and teachers move forward, or rather, make progress. My final recommendation is that a conception of philosophical progress, such as the one I have developed, be adopted in P4C.
Part 1
Philosophy for Children
2. A Community of Inquiry

The doing of philosophy requires conversation, dialogue and community, which are not compatible with the requirements of the traditional classroom. Philosophy entails converting the classroom into a community of inquiry, where students and teachers can talk together as persons and as members of the same community (Lipman, 1988, 41-42).

We can now speak of “converting the classroom into a community of inquiry” in which students listen to one another with respect, build on one another’s ideas, challenge one another to supply reasons for otherwise unsupported opinions, assist each other in drawing inferences from what has been said, and seek to identify one another’s assumptions (Lipman, 2003, 21).

I must first understand P4C if I am to develop a conception of philosophical progress that is efficacious for P4C. It is to this task that I devote this chapter.

Understanding the fundamentals of P4C is also important for two other reasons. First, by being clear about the praxis of P4C I can resolve one of the possible blocks to progress that occurs when teachers misunderstand P4C, and subsequently employ pedagogical strategies that will not support philosophical inquiry or philosophical progress. Second, I can show that the P4C literature does not include an adequate conception of epistemic philosophical progress.

P4C is currently a consistent school of thought, with consensus amongst P4C theorists about the Community of Inquiry (CI) being the core praxis. Each work in the P4C tradition seems to present a different but compatible perspective on this core praxis, rather than offering rival interpretations of the same theory. Following this trend, my aim in this thesis is to critically discuss what conception of philosophical progress suits P4C, and thus to extend the P4C literature, not to critically discuss and revise P4C itself. My concern in this chapter is with providing a clear description of the core praxis of P4C, so that in the following chapters I can devote my critical attention to a conception of philosophical progress that will be efficacious for this praxis. There are of course possible tensions and ambiguities in the core theory of P4C, and also rival theories of teaching philosophy to children from outside P4C, as well as some differences of opinion about practical details such as how much academic philosophy training P4C teachers need (Murris, 2008, 675-676), but I will not address these.

I will discuss the CI, the core praxis of P4C, in order to better understand P4C, but I will concentrate only on those facets relevant to philosophical progress. For example, I will not address the developmental path from an early to a mature CI or the crucial role the P4C teacher plays in this

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8 For example, each of the following papers (in press for an upcoming edition of Educational Philosophy and Theory on the educational theory of Philosophy for Children) explores a different implication of the core praxis of P4C: Philosophy, critical thinking and Philosophy for Children (Daniel & Auriac, in press); Communities of Inquiry: Politics, power and group dynamics (Burgh & Yorshansky, in press): Overcoming Relativism and Absolutism: Dewey’s ideals of truth and meaning in Philosophy for Children (Bleazeby, in press); and, The Many Faces of Constructivist Discussion (Golding, in press).
process. This developmental path, while essential to P4C, is not relevant to my concern with philosophical progress, and has already had extensive and detailed coverage (for example, Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 148-149). In fact, the concern with the development of the CI, I argue, has blinded much of the P4C literature to issues of epistemic philosophical progress. Progress in P4C, according to most commentators, is about such procedural issues as getting better communal dialogue or getting better thinking skills, rather than about making epistemic philosophical progress.

To avoid confusing procedural progress and epistemic philosophical progress, this chapter will concentrate on the features of an established CI rather than discussing the process of how a CI is established. This should not be seen as downplaying the essential role the P4C teacher has in establishing a CI. My concern here is to decide what it means to make philosophical progress in the context of P4C, which is best decided by focussing on a mature CI rather than muddying the waters by considering how we get better processes, dispositions and skills in a CI. Nevertheless, throughout the thesis and especially in chapter 8, I will say more about how students can learn to make philosophical progress by participating in a CI, and how the teacher’s role changes as their students learn.

I begin this chapter by examining what the P4C literature says about the CI, and the educative role the P4C teacher plays in this community. I complete my description of P4C by situating the CI as one type of constructivist discussion different from other similar types of discussion-based pedagogy. I finish this chapter by examining what is the P4C literature says about progress in P4C. I argue that the conceptions offered are predominantly about procedural progress, and so are inadequate as conceptions of epistemic philosophical progress. Yet I also argue that the P4C literature contains the seed of a conception of epistemic philosophical progress, which I examine further in chapter 3.

I. The main facets of a Community of Inquiry

The CI in P4C is best understood as a relationship we enter into, rather than something we do or have. As such it has three main facets: 1) It involves a group of participants or members (whom I refer to as ‘students’ in this thesis), who come together as a community; 2) they inquire together using common methods of philosophical inquiry to resolve common philosophical problems; and, 3) their bond as a community, as well as the motivation for their ongoing inquiry, comes from the caring ethos in a CI. Those in a CI care about their inquiry, and care about each other as co-inquirers, and so they have a commitment to thinking together, self-correction and to moving forward.

The rest of this section will explore these three intrinsically connected facets of a CI. Although inquiry in P4C only occurs in the context of a community of inquirers and the community exists only for the purpose of inquiry, yet, for clarity’s sake I will describe each facet separately. Inquiry will be described first, then the community context for inquiry, and then the ethos or culture of care which supports and integrates both the community and inquiry facets of a CI.

Philosophical inquiry

Inquiry in a CI involves “perseverance in self-correcting exploration of issues that are felt to be important and problematic” (Lipman, 1988, 20). Students raise philosophical questions and attempt to answer them in a process of inquiry that is linear, creative and reflective.

The inquiry process in P4C is often described as having the following stages (Lipman, 2003, 100-103; Golding, 2004, 20-21):

1. Stimulus: Read a story that raises philosophical issues
   Agenda: Ask philosophical questions about the issues in this story
   Dialogue and discussion: Attempt to explore and answer each question, facilitated by the teacher who draws on discussion plans and exercises
   Review and reflection: Draw final conclusions, make reasonable judgements and decide what to do next.
These stages of inquiry are sometimes taken to be definitional of P4C. However, they are merely a simple, introductory instance of a more sophisticated and flexible inquiry process. Chapter 6 will further explore the fundamental process of philosophical inquiry in P4C and show how this is central for making philosophical progress.

As well as following linear stages, it is also argued that inquiry in P4C is sometimes “nonlinear” and “unpredictable” (Kennedy, 2004, 756). Inquiry proceeds by what Lipman (referring to William James) calls “flights and perchings” (2003, 88), involving creative leaps (Matthews, 1978, 72) as well as “spontaneity, chance, and emergent combination” (Kennedy, 1999b, 344). For example, side-issues and tangents are often explored, and creative suggestions that seem to be off-track are used to advance the inquiry in unforeseen directions.

P4C inquiry also involves critical reflection about both the topic of the inquiry and the thinking processes and methods involved. For example, in a typical inquiry, students are not only concerned with possible answers to questions like ‘What is a friend?’ but they also reflect on how they should go about answering such questions and how well their inquiry is proceeding.

The reflective nature of inquiry in a CI also makes it self-regulating or self-correcting (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 34; Lipman, 2003, 163). By reflecting on the content and the process of the inquiry, the participants consciously evaluate their successes and failures. They judge whether the methods they employ are working, whether they have made errors or mistakes, and what they should do next.

Community

In P4C, philosophical inquiry is not an individual endeavour and instead occurs in the context of a Community of Inquiry: A group willing to inquire together about community chosen questions and issues. It is egalitarian, but not all participants need to be equal, and it involves dialogue across difference where everyone has an equal chance to participate.

P4C students form a community when they come together for the purpose of collaborative inquiry, and, as I will argue throughout this thesis, to make philosophical progress. Thus the community in a CI is formed in a similar way to how a team or band is formed by a group of people ‘playing’ together (Glaser, 1998a, 260-268; 1998b). They commit to addressing common philosophical problems using shared, interpersonal methods (Sharp, 1987, 44) and so are consolidated into “a single community, containing both children and adults engaged in a single inquiry” (Lipman, 2008, 109). The community is strengthened as it engages in critical reflection and establishes its “own procedures for thinking, judging and behaving” (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 2). Participants in a CI then experience themselves as members of a community and their actions as co-inquiry (Glaser, 1998a). They inquire with others for a common goal, rather than following their own individual inquiry in the company of others.

The identity of the inquiring community cannot be reducible to the identity of the individual members (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 37). As Lipman argues, “each participant contributes to the single thinking process” (2003, 139) and the community as a whole philosophises as a “thinking community” (2003, 95). The community thinks together involving shared cognition or distributed thinking, where there is a cognitive division of labour and each member does some of the thinking necessary for the inquiry.

In a prolonged session of private reflection, an individual will engage in a series of mental acts aimed at penetrating and analysing the matter at hand. Thus one will engage in wondering, questioning, inferring, defining, assuming, supposing, imagining, distinguishing, and so on. In shared cognition (also called “distributive thinking”), the same acts are engaged in, but by different members of the community. One person raises a question, another objects to an underlying assumption, still another offers a counterinstance (Lipman, 2003, 95).

In these ways, ‘we’ the community emerges (Glaser, 1998a, 268). This is why in P4C we can speak of the community’s ideas, questions, inquiry, conclusions and progress, and why it makes sense for those
in a CI to say such things as: “We came up with several different perspectives” or “We clarified the difference between friendship and love”.

Caring ethos

Community and inquiry are connected in P4C by the ethos of care, which Splitter and Sharp call the “form of life” (1995, 20) or “lived experience” (1995, 165) of the CI. In a CI, students show “care for the procedures of inquiry, care for one another as persons, care for the tradition that one has inherited, care for the creations of one another” (Sharp, 1987, 43), as well as care about ideas, issues and concepts (Splitter, 2006, 7). Care provides the basis for both philosophical inquiry and its community context. Inquiry requires epistemological care while community requires social care, and each reinforces the other. The caring “form of life” of a CI allows collaborative inquiry and dialogue across difference, leads to students being reasonable and gives the CI the features of an ideal democratic community. The rest of this section will further describe the care implicit in a CI and will show how it strengthens and connects community and inquiry in P4C.

The caring CI involves inclusive and non-adversarial dialogue. In a CI, students care about their own views, but they also care about the views of others and for ‘getting to the bottom of things’ rather than trying to win arguments. As such the CI operates as a collaborative inquiry rather than my idea against your idea.

In a caring CI students are interested in, and listen carefully to, what others have to say. They respectfully “attempt to understand another’s perspective from her point of view,” even if they do not agree with it, “and only then subject it to critical inquiry” (Sharp, 1987, 43). At no time are ideas to be disagreed with before they are given due consideration, and disagreement is always to be respectfully given as a way of moving the discussion forward, not simply for the sake of proving a point.

The collaborative respect involved in a CI is what makes communal inquiry possible. It creates a safe (Sharp, 1987, 44) and trusting (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 20) space in which otherwise vulnerable children can engage with inherently unsettling philosophical issues and improve their thinking. P4C is based on the pedagogical theory, explained in chapter 1, that we learn to think by engaging in dialogue. However, engaging in dialogue exposes students to the risk that others may attack or make fun of them and their ideas, or consider them to be wrong or stupid. Even if others are respectful, philosophy is still risky because one major aim of philosophy is to unsettle and challenge established views and basic assumptions. Unless these risks are minimised or removed, P4C students will keep themselves at an intellectual and emotional distance from the CI and productive student dialogue will not occur. The collaboration, respect and support in a caring CI removes these risks, and provides an atmosphere of intellectual safety. Even when someone’s ideas are being challenged or rejected, this is to be done in a spirit of moving forward together and is based on careful listening and then respectfully building on or challenging the ideas suggested. Because students in a CI disagree with and challenge ideas not persons, neither disagreement nor challenge is seen as a personal attack, and instead it is taken to be a way of advancing the joint inquiry. “That’s a stupid idea” becomes replaced with “Some reasons to agree are … but a reason to disagree might be …”

By minimising intellectual risks, the caring CI allows for dialogue across difference, so individuals can inquire together and be a community despite disagreements. Challenge and disagreement is essential for a dialogical-inquiry to make progress, but it can also tear a community apart if not handled respectfully or safely. Care sustains the underlying relationships of the CI and thus sustains the dialogue even when dealing with challenging subject matter and the resultant differences of opinion.

Participants in a CI also care about advancing their inquiry, so they not only keep the inquiry safe, but also rigorous. They give reasons, justification and support for their suggestions and request the same of others. They are concerned to move outside their own limited conceptions and to consider a range of possible perspectives, without getting ‘trapped’ in an assumption, prejudice or mistaken view. They treat all views, including their own, as fallible and thus are willing to critically evaluate all views and to
change their minds in accordance with the weight of reasons. They will also offer their ideas to public scrutiny as a ‘quality control’ mechanism so they can get constructive criticism.

The rigorous care in a CI, involving multiple perspectives, fallibilism and public scrutiny of ideas, can be summarised as self-correction. Students care about ideas and they want to correct and improve them:

This means, for example, that [they] are not afraid to modify their point of view or correct any reasoning – their own or that of their fellow members – which seems faulty; and they are willing to give up an idea or an answer which is found wanting (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 18-19).

Being immersed in the caring ethos of rigour, collaborative inquiry, reflection and self-correction encourages the development of what Sharp calls “cognitive virtues” such as:

- open-mindedness, willingness to accept criticism, or consider alternative positions,
- willingness to subject our hypotheses to analysis, willingness to consider reasons…

By being immersed in the practice of caring, collaborative and rigorous inquiry, P4C students come to be caring, collaborative and rigorous.

Possessing these cognitive virtues is what both Lipman (1988, 128) and Siegel (1988) call “being reasonable”, which goes further than being logical and involves both epistemic and social care. As Rorty explains, care moves us from cold, rational, logic to being warm, sympathetic human beings (1999, 82f). Caring thinking strives for the most reasonable perspective that involves empathy, compassion and valuing of the other, not just the most logical argument. Without logical care we get nonsense, but without empathic care we get icy, dehumanised rationality. The CI combines both.

The ethos of care in a CI gives it the features of an ideal democratic community involving communal, reasonable, egalitarian, deliberative and participatory dialogue (Cam, 2000; Burgh, et al., 2006, 32). Both a CI and an ideal democracy proceed by “exploring different points of view, discussing disagreements reasonably, and keeping an open mind” about issues of importance to the community (Cam, 2006b, 19). The CI is non-hierarchical and egalitarian and involves open intellectual exchange that “excludes claims based on authority, tradition, force, charisma, or intellectual status” (Kennedy, 1999b, 345: citing Habermas, 1984, 42). Each member can make a contribution and all perspectives and experiences are considered without being swayed by irrelevant personal details (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 34-36). By participating in a CI with these features, children strengthen their civic and democratic character (Lipman, 1988, 57-61).

Summary of the main facets of a Community of Inquiry

The CI in P4C has three major facets: 1) a process of philosophical inquiry which is reflective and self-correcting; 2) a community context organised around common problems and methods, thinking together and distributed cognition; and 3) a caring ethos that is collaborative, epistemologically rigorous (but not combative), safe and democratic.

Although each of these three facets can be isolated and discussed, they are intertwined in the praxis of P4C. Inquiry cannot exist without the inquiring community to sustain the inquiry despite disagreements and to provide inter-subjective critique to rigorously test views. Likewise, the community only comes together for the sake of inquiry. Inquiry and community are two expressions of an ethos of care: care about others and their views and care about the inquiry we construct together. Given the CI is the core of the praxis of P4C, the topic of my thesis can now be expressed as: What conception of philosophical progress would be fitting in the context of the communal, caring inquiry in P4C?
II. The teacher: Philosophically self-effacing but procedurally strong

When the teacher is looked upon as a font of information … the practice of turning always to the teacher for reassurance or verification is established. This creates a pattern of teacher-student interchanges that defeats the purpose of Philosophy for Children, because it undermines the notion of community and legitimates instead the notion of teacher as informational authority and students as ignorant learners. In a community of inquiry, on the other hand, teachers and students find themselves together as co-inquirers, and the teacher tries to facilitate this by encouraging student-student as well as teacher-student interchanges (Lipman, 1988, 96-97).

In this section, to refine and expand my description of P4C, I describe the distinctive role that the P4C teacher plays in the CI. The main objective of the P4C teacher, according to the common core of the P4C literature, is to run their lessons as a CI where students participate in collaborative philosophical inquiry. To do this, P4C teachers take a special pedagogical role. The P4C teacher:

- does not function as a transmitter of knowledge and values, nor as a banker making intellectual deposits in the minds of her students. She teaches by wondering, by thinking and by doing, in reflective and self-correcting fashion, and by helping her students do likewise (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 120)

In summary, the P4C teacher is “philosophically self-effacing but procedurally strong” (Lipman & Sharp, 1982, vii; Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 149). They emphasise the procedures of philosophical inquiry, using questioning as their main pedagogical action, rather than imposing an agenda of philosophical arguments and positions that must be covered. They coach student thinking, and engage in co-inquiry so students learn to inquire for themselves, rather than leading students to pre-decided outcomes. The rest of this section will unpack and examine these aspects of the philosophically self-effacing but procedurally strong P4C teacher.

The philosophical coach, model and facilitator

Being procedurally strong implies that the P4C teacher’s primary focus is on the procedures of philosophical inquiry. Their aim is to enculturate their students in the procedures and practices of inquiry. In particular, they act as a philosophical coach who models “the tools and procedures of inquiry” (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 140), and builds and encourages cognitive skills in students (Lipman, 1988, 96-97). This does not mean that they do very little. P4C teachers need to intervene frequently to focus the inquiry, model the procedures, coach the skills, and encourage philosophical moves from students. The less experienced the students are, the more the teacher needs to do.

Lipman sees this coaching and modelling relationship between teacher and student as analogous to the relationship between master and apprentice (2003, 25). As the philosophical master, the teacher facilitates the group inquiry and shows their students what philosophical inquiry looks like, so they can internalise the processes and learn to guide themselves.

The P4C teacher also aims to become redundant as a facilitator and coach. They coach and facilitate the inquiry so that the role of inquiry facilitator can eventually be distributed amongst the students, and the teacher can become “just another member of the group” (Kennedy, 2004, 753).

The ignorant scholar

Being philosophically self-effacing is taken to mean showing “scholarly” or “philosophical ignorance” (Scolnicov, 1978; Reed, 1992b; Gardner 1995).

The teacher poses as someone who does not know in order to provoke, motivate and facilitate the thinking of students. It is characterised by the teacher showing a self-conscious display of curiosity and puzzlement rather than as the person who knows the ‘right’ answer (Fisher, 2003, 146-147).
The philosophically ignorant P4C teacher does not act as an “informational authority” (Lipman, 1988, 96) and does not claim to have the answers in advance (Burgh, et al., 2006, 152). They avoid what I call an outcome-leading approach and so shun what Splitter and Sharp call “pre-empted conclusions” (1995, 137-139).

A pre-empted conclusion, or what I call a ‘pre-decided outcome’ or ‘pre-decided milestone’, is some substantive point that the teacher decides must be addressed or reached in the inquiry. One type of pre-decided outcome (probably uncommon in philosophy teaching) is a final position that the teacher pre-determines the students should adopt at the conclusion of their inquiry. Other types of pre-decided outcomes (perhaps better called milestones) are aspects of the intellectual terrain that must be addressed or covered during the inquiry, such as an argument that must be considered, a distinction that must be made, an interpretation or implication that must be acknowledged, or a line of inquiry that must be pursued. A pre-decided outcome could be determined before an inquiry begins, but the teacher could also decide during an inquiry that the inquiry must cover particular milestones.

P4C teachers should avoid leading students to pre-decided outcomes because this precludes open, independent inquiry and prevent students from learning how to think for themselves (Lipman, 1988, 96). As Dewey notes, what I call an outcome-leading approach relegates training in thinking to secondary importance (Dewey, 1933, ch4, §4). When teachers consistently control the direction an inquiry must take and the conclusions or outcomes that must be reached then students become dependent on the teacher (Dewey, 1916, 57), become less inclined to think independently (Lipman, 1988, 96-97) and intellectually impotent (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 120).

By rejecting an outcome-leading approach, P4C teachers have the space to be procedurally strong. They give up their pre-decided outcomes so they can focus on encouraging and facilitating the process of philosophical thinking and inquiry. I call this taking a thinking-encouraging approach (or alternatively a process-encouraging or inquiry-encouraging approach).

When a teacher takes an outcome-leading approach he/she evaluates whether their students have covered the ‘correct’ content, argument, position, interpretation or issues, and if not he/she directs them (subtly or not) to where they ‘should’ be. Their lessons tend “to become a guessing bee as to what the teacher is really after” (Dewey, 1933, ch18, §2) and there is no room to teach students to inquire for themselves. The thinking-encouraging teacher, on the other hand, does not have a pre-decided outcome in mind. They evaluate what further thinking would be useful to move the inquiry forward, such as justification or clarification, and then encourage their students to engage in this thinking.

To be a philosophically self-effacing, ignorant scholar, the P4C teacher should always avoid pre-decided outcomes. In a newly formed CI, this would imply that the teacher should avoid offering any substantive philosophical views, because, as Splitter and Sharp (1995, 148-149) argue, students will interpret any substantive views expressed by the teacher as the pre-decided ‘right’ outcome, and this will discourage genuine dialogue and independent student inquiry. But as students become procedurally strong and are willing and able to evaluate the teacher’s ideas on their own merits and not as the authoritative views, the teacher is free to be less philosophically self-effacing and can make substantive contributions and suggestions (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 148). The views put forward by the teacher are then treated as one view among others, rather than as the ideas that must be pursued, or the only reasonable outcome of the inquiry. Like every other view, the teacher’s views are judged according to their merit in advancing the inquiry rather than as the ‘correct’ viewpoint to address or adopt.

**The co-inquirer**

By showing scholarly ignorance, avoiding pre-decided outcomes, and emphasising the process of philosophical inquiry, the P4C teacher is able to engage in genuine inquiry with their students. A genuine inquiry occurs when neither teacher nor students know the issues they will address or the answers they will arrive at, and thus they have to follow the inquiry where it leads (Burgh, et al., 2006, 51, 152). A genuine inquiry is “a process of discovery and invention – bringing together different
perspectives and building on these differences” rather than “a process of working inexorably and inflexibly towards a predetermined answer” (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 139).

In the genuine inquiry in P4C, the teacher becomes a co-inquirer with students (Burgh, et al., 2006, 111; Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 149). Although the teacher will likely have their own answers to the questions being discussed, and their own views about what arguments and distinctions need to be considered, they do not lead students to these answers or outcomes. Their role is to “relearn all this when they are engaged with students” (Burgh, et al., 2006, 86).

In a philosophical discussion we become pioneers alongside our children, thinking anew what we so easily take for granted, and recreating what Buddhists call ‘beginner’s mind’ (Fisher, 2003, 249).

The P4C teacher must be ready to re-discover and re-construct philosophical ideas, rather than presenting pre-existing ideas or taking students down pre-existing paths. They are not instructing them so much as participating in the philosophical inquiry with them – albeit as a more skilled participant and coach who provides support to enable their students to learn how to philosophise for themselves.

**The questioner**

The procedurally strong but philosophically self-effacing P4C teacher uses questions as their main teaching action. They can be procedurally strong by using the questions to facilitate the process of philosophical inquiry and to model the sorts of questions students can ask to self-facilitate. They can also be philosophically self-effacing by asking questions as openings for further inquiry rather than as the means to direct students to pre-decided outcomes (Golding, 2005a).

P4C commentators identify two main types of questions the P4C teacher should ask – substantive and procedural questions (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 58-59).

Substantive questions are the typical philosophical questions such as ‘Can we ever know something for certain?’ and ‘Can abortion be justified?’ Even though the P4C teacher asks these questions to introduce teacher-chosen substantive philosophical issues, this can be compatible with being philosophically self-effacing if the P4C teacher does not have a pre-determined answer in mind. I will further examine substantive questions in chapter 5.

Procedural questions, such as ‘Why?’ and ‘What is an example?’ guide the processes and methods of philosophical thinking rather than being about substantive content, and so are an ideal tool for being procedurally strong. I have elsewhere called these thought-encouraging questions because each question elicits a particular type of philosophically important thinking from students, without leading them to pre-decided substantive conclusions (Golding, 2005a, 2006b).9 For example:

- ‘Why?’ asks students to give reasons
- ‘What do you mean?’ asks the students to clarify or explain
- ‘What is the difference between Geoff’s idea and yours?’ asks the students to compare

I will examine thought-encouraging questions in more depth in chapters 6 and 8 where I indicate their important role in making philosophical progress and in educating for philosophical progress.

The P4C teacher needs to be skilful in asking both of these kinds of questions if they are to model and facilitate philosophical inquiry without leading students to pre-decided outcomes. The teacher needs to be able to ask the right question at the right time to move the discussion forward, and coach the thinking of students, while encouraging them to do their own thinking.

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9 Fisher (2003, 153-154), drawing on Paul (1994, 1995, Paul & Elder, 2002), calls these “Socratic questions.” I have also called them “content-neutral questions” because they encourage thinking while being neutral about the substantive content (Golding, 2002). They are content-neutral in the sense of either being content-free (eg ‘Why?’) or they use the content already suggested by students (eg ‘Is Brian’s use of freedom the same as Jill’s?’).
Summary of the teacher: Philosophically self-effacing but procedurally strong

I have shown several ways in which it is argued that the P4C teacher can encourage a productive community of philosophical inquiry by being philosophically self-effacing but procedurally strong. They should engage in co-inquiry with their students, assisting them to be rigorous in their thinking, rather than leading them to pre-decided philosophical outcomes. They should show scholarly ignorance and be a thinking coach and (redundant) facilitator, encouraging their students to think for themselves and facilitate their own inquiry. To achieve this, their main pedagogical action is to ask substantive philosophical questions and thought-encouraging procedural questions.

This conception of the P4C teacher provides an essential context for the conception of philosophical progress I develop in part 2 of this thesis. I can now ask: What conception of philosophical progress would be efficacious in a CI where there is philosophically rigorous, genuine co-inquiry involving teacher and students, where no-one knows where the inquiry will end up?

Yet, as it currently stands, the literature about the P4C teacher does not adequately address the issue of epistemic philosophical progress. It is overly focussed on how the teacher assists students to acquire and improve the procedures and methods of philosophical inquiry (in other words, how they encourage procedural progress), and it does not explain how the teacher facilitates and coaches epistemic philosophical progress. In particular, the literature leaves a number of related tensions inadequately addressed. How does the P4C teacher balance: following the inquiry where it leads while directing it to be rigorous and philosophical? Applying their philosophical expertise while being philosophically ignorant? Giving the students ‘free rein’ while intervening to scaffold productive inquiry? In the next section I develop a theoretical understanding of how the P4C teacher finds this balance. Then, in chapter 8, after the conception of philosophical progress for P4C has been presented, I develop a stance the P4C teacher can take which will enable them to keep the balance in practice.

III. The Community of Inquiry as constructivist discussion

In this section I combine my description of the CI from section I with my description of the role of the teacher in a CI from section II. Together, these imply that the CI is a constructivist discussion-based pedagogy (or similarly, a democratic, student-centred, or inquiry-based pedagogy). Although this is an accurate description, it does not isolate what is distinctive about P4C. So, in this section I draw on the P4C and wider educational literature to distinguish the CI from other constructivist discussion-based pedagogies, and to indicate how the CI can support philosophical progress. In later chapters I will build a conception of philosophical progress for P4C on the resulting description of the CI.

Constructivism, as Phillips (1995) and Perkins (1999) observe, has many faces, and these may have no more than a family resemblance in common (Burbules, 2000b; Phillips, 2003, 239). So, although P4C is a constructivist discussion-based pedagogy, it is easily confused with other superficially similar pedagogies. At one extreme are teacher-directed discussions where students are led to construct the ‘correct,’ teacher-decided, understanding. At the other extreme are free discussions where students can construct any understanding. I argue that the CI in P4C should be situated as the mean or balance between these two extreme kinds of constructivist discussion.

I begin by describing the underpinnings of constructivist discussion as a teaching practice and then argue that, based on differences in both form and function, there are many types of constructivist discussion-based pedagogy. The subtle distinctions between these pedagogies are then analysed in order to present and illustrate a continuum of constructivist discussions in which the CI will be situated.

Constructivist discussion

The basic feature of constructivist pedagogy, as I argued in chapter 1, is that students learn by actively constructing their own knowledge, not by passively receiving ready-made knowledge. Knowledge is not fixed and waiting to be acquired, and it cannot be directly imparted to passive students. Learning is
a process of interpreting and organising information and experiences into meaningful units, transforming old conceptions and constructing new ones. “Thus learning needs to be conceived of as something a learner does, not something that is done to a learner” (Fosnot, 1989, 5).

This is not to say that teaching practices are either wholly constructivist or transmissive. A better conception would be of a continuum from constructivist to transmissive. At one end are constructivist practices where students are active in knowledge-development, such as student inquiry and problem-solving. At the other end of the continuum are practices that involve transmission of knowledge to passive students, such as writing down notes from the board. Yet there is also a range of practices that strike a balance between construction and transmission, such as teaching a specific formula and then allowing students to construct an understanding of it by applying it in different contexts.

The conception of constructivism I present also allows for learning to involve discovery and invention. I argue that any learning involving active discovery or invention of new knowledge, or to conscript Dewey’s (1916) term, active reconstrcuting of existing knowledge, counts as constructivist. The essential feature is that students are active in their own knowledge development, not whether the knowledge is created or discovered.10

A constructivist pedagogical discussion (henceforth referred to as ‘constructivist discussion’) is a discourse between two or more people, at least one of whom is a student, that involves the student(s) actively constructing their own knowledge. Some (eg. Dillon, 1994) might reserve the title ‘discussion’ for oral discourse involving groups rather than only two people, where the participants have equal power to contribute, or where genuine dialogue is taking place. I take a broader view of discussion that includes any oral discourse between two or more people.

The CI is one kind of constructivist discussion.

Function and form

Although all constructivist discussions may appear to have the same form, I argue that there are subtle but significant functional differences between them that are relevant for understanding what is distinctive about P4C.11 Constructivist discussions share a common questioning, collaborative, dialogical form where students are active in knowledge production. They all involve:

- student to student and student to teacher talk
- students taking the time to think, reflect and evaluate
- thought-provoking questions being asked and answered
- inquiry into problems
- the experience of cognitive conflict
- multiple student conceptions being shared and revised.

This constructivist form has a different function in different classrooms. Some teachers use this form of teaching to help students find or appreciate pre-decided answers. Others use almost identical forms to help students to follow their inquiry wherever it leads. Still others use this form to allow their students to construct whatever ideas they like without constraint or structure. This point can be made in a

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10 This is contrary to some positions. For example Boghossian argues that constructivism is solely and necessarily creative, involving a radical subjectivity where students create their own truths without objective constraints (2006, 719). He contrasts this with Socratic teaching where students are led to uncover their misconceptions and then discover the objective truth for themselves (2006, 718). I think Boghossian mistakes the essence of constructivism for an accidental feature emphasised by the term ‘construct.’ I argue that both radical constructivism where any view is acceptable and Socratic teaching count as constructivist discussion.

11 This form-function approach to analysing teaching practices is influenced by recent empirical research. For example, Clarke (2005, 8) introduces the form-function distinction to compare pedagogical practices from different countries. Scott, et al., (2006, 612) distinguish between different teaching practices on the basis of their function in the broader context of a lesson or a series of lessons, rather than by their form alone.
different way by modifying Burbules’ “dialogue game” terminology (1993, ch.3). There are various ways to play the discussion game, just as there are many ways of playing cricket: one-day events, test matches and backyard cricket. Each game involves different rules and methods for moving the game forward. One constructivist discussion game is to “guess what answer the teacher has in mind”. Another is to follow the inquiry where it leads to new knowledge. Finally, the game could simply be for everyone to participate. The same basic form of discussion is used to play very different games.

Dillon (1994, 22) points to a specific functional difference between constructivist discussion games based on how questions are used. He distinguishes between using questions to lead students to outcomes that are “predetermined to be right” (the pre-decided outcomes discussed in the last section), and using them to invite further discussion. Based on this, the same form of question can have different functions in different discussions. For example, ‘Why do you think that?’ could be asked by the teacher to uncover the contradictory beliefs of their students so that eventually they will be able to appreciate the truth the teacher has in mind. Alternatively, this question could be asked so that teacher and students can work together to explore and critique the justification for a position, and also so that students can learn how to ask such questions themselves. Finally the question could be asked simply to understand a student’s idea, but with no intention of challenging or developing this idea.

This kind of important functional difference tends to be overlooked. All student discussions with the form described above are generally assumed to be equivalent. This may not be as problematic as treating apples as oranges, but it is like treating cooking apples as eating apples. Ignoring these differences makes it impossible to articulate what a CI is and thus obscures the context for the conception of philosophical progress to be developed. In the rest of this section I make explicit how similar forms of constructivist discussions can differ in function, and I situate P4C more clearly in the subtle balance between two functions of constructivist discussion. I also start to sketch how the CI can be epistemically productive and thus how P4C might support a conception of philosophical progress.

**A continuum of constructivist discussions**

I argue that discussions that share the constructivist form can be placed on a continuum according to the function of the discussion (Figure 1). A discussion where students are active in constructing their own knowledge can be more or less directed by the teacher and more or less free. At one end of the continuum are constructivist discussions which have an authoritative structure and direction imposed by the teacher. At the other end are discussions which are free and undirected. Between these two extremes is the CI, which balances student freedom and teacher-direction.

![Figure 1: Continuum of constructivist discussions arranged according to their function](image)

I do not put this continuum forward in the Aristotelian sense where the mean is ‘good’ and the extremes ‘bad’. The CI is not appropriate for every teaching purpose and there may be situations where a teacher-directed or a free discussion is better. I also do not claim that all teaching practices will fit neatly into this continuum. It may be possible for some teaching practice to have some features of free discussions.

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12 This continuum is similar to: Roberts’ (1996) distinction between imposition and abandonment; Burbules’ (1993) distinction between instruction and conversation; and the distinction from Scott, et al., (2005) between authoritative and dialogic teaching.
and some of teacher-directed discussions. My point in describing the continuum is first, to indicate there are differences between constructivist discussions which should be acknowledged and, second, to more clearly show how the CI in P4C differs from other similar constructivist pedagogical discussions.

I will describe and illustrate discussions from the two ends and the middle of the continuum in the next three sub-sections. The illustrations are based on actual discussions on the topic of racism which have been amalgamated and condensed to make the differences apparent. The first two are versions of the illustration of the problem of philosophical progress in P4C from chapter 1. The third illustration, showing the middle ground between the extremes, is new. After the illustrations I will describe the continuum of constructivist discussions in several different ways that further highlight the distinctive features of the CI.

**Teacher-directed discussions**

At one extreme of the continuum of constructivist discussions are teacher-directed discussions. These discussions are employed because teachers (P4C and otherwise) believe that their students will not get to the important issues and conclusions if they are not directed. Ordered inquiry results, unlike the free discussion outlined below, but it is the teacher who provides this order and keeps the students on track towards the teacher-determined outcomes. As such, teacher-directed discussions can be effective for helping students to understand the knowledge chosen by the teacher. However, they are also open to the criticism that they are deceptive and manipulative: “Why don’t you just tell us the answer?” a student might legitimately complain (Perkins, 1999, 8).

**Box 5: Illustration of teacher-directed discussion**

| Student 1 | Racism is treating Chinese or Indigenous people badly. |
| Teacher   | That’s not quite right. How else could we describe the treatment of the minority race? |
| Student 1 | I’m not sure. |
| Teacher   | What is it about the bad treatment that makes it racist? |
| Student 2 | The minority race doesn’t like it. |
| Teacher   | Almost. Try again. |
| Student 2 | It’s different from how the majority are treated. |
| Teacher   | That’s it. Racism is when a minority race is treated differently. So, is racism ever acceptable? |
| Student 3 | Maybe racism could be good when it gives a minority more opportunity? |
| Teacher   | Why would you think that? |
| Student 3 | Well, it’s good if people who have had it hard, like Indigenous Australians, get extra stuff. |
| Teacher   | Maybe, but that’s not quite the answer I was looking for. Wouldn’t giving Indigenous people extra be unfair on everyone else? Let’s see if we can get a better answer. |
| Student 1 | Maybe racism is OK when it’s the minority against the majority? |
| Teacher   | Hmmm. Don’t you think the majority would feel unfairly treated? |
| Student 1 | I guess so. I’d feel bad if I couldn’t do some things because of my race. |
| Teacher   | Good point. Can someone use this to explain why racism is bad? |
| Student 4 | Racism is always bad because it’s always unequal and unfair treatment. |
| Teacher   | That’s right. You can’t have good racism because that would be treating people unequally and treating people unequally is always wrong. OK, let’s move on … |

The discussion in this illustration is productive because the teacher has imposed a direction. Their interventions indicate what line of inquiry is ‘correct’ and they direct students to this authoritative understanding. The cost of ‘keeping the students on track’ is that they have little independence.
Free discussions
At the other extreme of the continuum of constructivist discussions are free discussions where students are given almost total freedom to construct whatever views they like. Free discussions are characterised by the absence of set rules or structures beyond procedural rules for participation and turn-taking (and even these can be absent). Epistemic rules or methods to support productive inquiry are neither imposed by the teacher nor self-imposed by the students. As such, these discussions are more like conversations than inquiry, and they tend to go nowhere. This type of discussion seems to be the target of the criticism reported by Brooks & Brooks (1999, 22) that constructivism involves intellectual anarchy where students capriciously pursue whatever interests them.

There are a number of ways a discussion might be free. Burbules’ distinction between inclusive and critical discussion (1993, 111) is useful for identifying two important examples. An inclusive free discussion could involve all participants sharing their ideas about an issue. Daniel, et al., (2005) call such dialogue “anecdotal” because the discussion is more like a collection of unrelated comments. Alternatively, a critical free discussion could involve some students dogmatically asserting their own views without intending to find the best possible answer. In either case, because the discussion is free, the students have no means available to keep the discussion on track or to make philosophical progress.

In this illustration the students have been given freedom but no assistance to discipline their discussion. As Roberts’ (1996) states, they are “abandoned.” This leads to the irrelevant suggestions by students 4, 5 and 6, and to student 1 dominating the group, but there is not productive inquiry dialogue.

Although free discussion should generally be avoided in P4C because it does not allow for epistemic progress, there are good reasons to sometimes include such discussion as part of a more ordered inquiry. Free ‘brainstorming’ is useful to generate ideas or to uncover the conceptions students currently hold before critical inquiry and testing. Such discussion also helps build community and the conversational relations that allow more productive discussion to happen (Burbules, 1993, 40).

Community of Inquiry
The CI occupies the middle ground of the continuum and finds a balance between imposed direction and freedom and between teacher and student direction. In a CI, unlike a teacher-directed discussion, the students direct the discussion by critically examining suggestions and deciding how they will follow...
the inquiry where it leads. In a CI, unlike a free discussion, the teacher becomes a thinking coach and trains students to engage in independent, productive discussion. Because student-to-student critical interaction is involved in a CI, it is more properly called dialogue to distinguish it from the other types of discussion or conversation (Buchler, 1993; Curnow, 2000; Gardner, 1995).

**Box 7: Illustration of Community of Inquiry**

| Student 1 | Racism is treating Chinese or Indigenous people badly. |
| Student 2 | Yeah, but everyone is treated badly. |
| Teacher   | What do you mean by that? |
| Student 2 | Well, racism can’t be just bad treatment because that would mean that every bad thing that happens to someone is racism. I reckon racism is treating one race differently from another. |
| Teacher   | What does everyone else think? Is racism about bad treatment or different treatment? |
| Student 4 | I think it’s both – racism is treating one race differently and badly compared to another race. |
| Student 5 | That’s pretty good. Can we use this as our definition? (murmurs of agreement). Now, how do we solve our main problem: Is racism ever OK? |
| Student 3 | Maybe racism could be good when it gives a minority more opportunity? |
| Student 4 | What’s an example of giving a minority more opportunity? |
| Student 6 | What about when Indigenous students are given special scholarships to go to university? |
| Student 5 | But is that good racism? |
| Student 2 | Yeah, it’s good. Indigenous students have had a hard time because of racism towards them and towards their ancestors. It’s good to give them some extra help to make up for this. |
| Student 7 | But that can’t be good. It’s unfair to all the others who have had a hard time but don’t get a scholarship. |
| Student 1 | That’s right. I reckon the problem is that whenever we give one group more opportunity we disadvantage another group. Racism always leads to bad consequences for someone. |
| Teacher   | So how will we decide if giving a minority more opportunity really is good racism? |
| Student 8 | It’s good when it’s fair and bad when it’s unfair. |
| Student 3 | I don’t know if that helps much. Is it fair or unfair to give scholarships based on race? Some might say it’s fair to make up for the past, but others might say it’s unfair to people now…. |

This discussion illustrates what students actually say after long-term coaching in P4C when they have internalised the procedures of the philosophical CI. The students direct their own inquiry and ensure it is disciplined and makes progress. Teacher interventions are prompts for further thinking rather than directions to the ‘right’ outcomes and the students are doing much of the inquiry work that would be done by the teacher in the teacher-directed discussion. In a less mature CI the teacher would do more of the inquiry work, but this would still be different from a teacher-directed discussion as the teacher would avoid pre-decided outcomes and would coach students to inquire for themselves.

**Continuum of direction: direction imposed - abandoned**

A constructivist discussion can have more or less direction and this direction can be more or less imposed by the teacher rather than by the students (Figure 2). At one end of the continuum are discussions whose direction is imposed by the teacher, at the other end, the teacher does not impose at all and so students are effectively abandoned and directionless. The middle of the continuum represents a balance between complete teacher control and complete freedom without assistance. In this middle ground, where the CI is situated, the students have some freedom to self-direct their own productive inquiry but they also have teacher support to enable them to direct themselves productively.
Figure 2: Continuum of direction for inquiry

The more the teacher imposes the direction for the discussion towards pre-decided understandings, then the less opportunity there is for independent inquiry. Roberts (1996) uses the label “imposition” for these teaching practices. Even though students may be actively engaged in making sense of and appreciating the teacher-decided outcomes, these are still imposed on them. The teacher chooses what questions to ask, what lines of inquiry to pursue, and ‘the correct’ understandings students should develop. The result is that students become increasingly dependent on the teacher to direct them.

At the other extreme, the more a student discussion is left free, where students choose their own direction without interference, then the less productive it is. In a free discussion the teacher does not impose a direction, leaving this up to the students, but the students are also unable to give their discussion a direction. The philosophical inquiry skills and dispositions that students need for productive discussion such as reflecting, justifying and open-mindedness do not develop spontaneously or autonomously and need to be deliberately and explicitly encouraged, supported and trained (Daniel, et al., 2005). Yet the freest discussion offers students no such encouragement, training or support.

The middle ground of the continuum, where P4C is located, provides a balance between too much and too little teacher-imposed direction, between leading students to the ‘correct’ understandings and offering no training. The teacher’s aim in the CI is to facilitate productive, independent inquiry, and to do this they have to balance intervening to offer substantive advice or to foster the thinking needed for autonomous inquiry, and allowing students to conduct their own inquiry without interference. Put another way, the CI enables autonomous inquiry, where the free discussion allows it without supporting it, and the teacher-directed discussion ensures productive inquiry without allowing autonomy.

P4C students in a CI are supported to become both independent and disciplined in their inquiry. They learn to stick to the point, test views and make reasoned judgements, so that they can self-direct a productive inquiry. The discussion in a CI then can have a direction and will move forward, but this direction is not pre-decided by the teacher, but is decided by the students (with support from their teacher) as the discussion progresses.

The P4C teacher is still essential to this student-directed inquiry. They have relinquished the role of “informational authority” that they would take in a teacher-directed discussion, but they do not give up all authority as they would in a free discussion. In a CI they are still an “instructional authority” who enables students to learn to inquire for themselves (Lipman, 1988, 96; Gregory, 2003, 404). Students are given freedom to self-direct their discussion, but the teacher still intervenes to encourage them to follow the inquiry where it leads, to ensure they are rigorous, and to scaffold productive inquiry. For example, in a CI a teacher might suggest possible lines of thought, such as “Jane’s idea seems to lead to three possible implications …” In this way a P4C teacher provides support for student inquiry by doing some of the inquiry work, while still allowing some independence. The overriding aim of the teacher is to distribute as much of the inquiry work as students can handle so that they learn to be autonomous inquirers. This is unlike the free discussion where students are left to do all the inquiry work, even when they are unable to handle this work. This is also unlike a teacher-directed discussion where teachers do the work for their students to make sure they find and appreciate the ‘correct’ outcomes.

Continuum of engagement: teacher - student

The continuum of constructivist discussions can also be understood according to the different engagements of the students. At one end, students are uncritically engaged with the teacher, at the other
they are uncritically engaged with other students. In the middle they are critically engaged with ideas from students and teacher.\textsuperscript{13}

In a teacher-centred discussion students are uncritically engaged with the teacher (see Figure 3). The pattern of talk is teacher-student-teacher, with the teacher dominating the discussion. The students only engage with the teacher and respond to the teachers’ questions and directions. Yet they also tend to do this uncritically by trying to give the teacher the answer he/she was looking for.

At the other extreme, the free discussion could be described as student-centred where the pattern of talk is from student to student (see Figure 3, from Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 149). However, because it is free, students tend to say whatever they like, and this results in uncritical monological discussion where each participant pursues “a personal idea, without being influenced by peers’ perspectives” (Daniel, et al., 2002, 6). This sort of discussion is more about having a chance to speak than engaging in co-inquiry. Students take turns and offer their own ideas on the topic but do not critically evaluate individual suggestions or explore the logical implications or connections between them.

![Figure 3: The dynamics of a teacher-centred (left) and student-centred (right) discussion](image)

The CI balances the two extremes because it is an idea-centred discussion. Students engage with ideas suggested by other students and so the pattern of talk has the dynamics of a student-centred discussion. Yet because of the training and facilitation provided by the teacher, students actively and critically respond to the ideas suggested rather than merely take turns. They critically evaluate other ideas and use them to improve their own. For example they might make connections and distinctions between ideas suggested, or they might agree, disagree, evaluate, challenge and build on the ideas. This critical, idea-centred discussion might be described as true dialogue. It is essential to P4C, and the necessary pedagogical foundation for making philosophical progress.

**Continuum of teacher scaffolding: herding - no support**

A third way to describe the continuum is according to the extent of the scaffolding the teacher provides. The concept of scaffolding, originally developed by Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976), is important for constructivist teaching. We scaffold student learning by providing the guidance and support that they need to be able to construct knowledge for themselves. For example, in a constructivist discussion the teacher might scaffold their students’ understanding of a topic by asking them what their current understandings are and then asking questions that will assist them to isolate what they do not understand and then develop a better understanding. The teacher might also scaffold their students’ ability to inquire for themselves by modelling the methods of inquiry and then prompting students to use these methods themselves.

As a discussion tends towards the teacher-directed end of the continuum, the teacher tends to provide so much scaffolding that students have no room for independent inquiry and are constrained to take only one perspective. The teacher decides what outcomes students need to understand and what paths they should take to get there, and then they direct students down these paths and to these outcomes. They control the inquiry rather than provide scaffolding so their students can inquire for themselves.

When discussions tend towards the free end of the continuum, teachers provide no scaffolding, and leave it completely up to the students to decide what to do. But without scaffolding, students do not spontaneously develop the methods needed for philosophical inquiry, and so they are unable to engage in independent productive inquiry.

In a CI, the teacher does not tell students where to go, but provides scaffolding such as advice and information, so they can find their own way. As students become more and more experienced in philosophical inquiry, the teacher can provide less and less scaffolding. Eventually this might appear to be like free discussion, but it is different because students have been scaffolded and coached and they are independently able to make reasonable judgements about how the inquiry should proceed.

**Continuum of openness of inquiry: convergent - divergent**

A final way of throwing light on P4C is by describing the continuum of constructivist discussion in terms of the openness of the inquiry involved, and in particular, how convergent or divergent it is.

A discussion is convergent to the extent that it is directed towards a single truth (Burbules, 1993, 111) or a “correct and final answer” (Burbules, 1993, 116). In this context, by ‘convergent’ I mean discussions which have teacher-determined outcomes that the discussion must converge on. In a fully convergent discussion, only one point of view, interpretation or argument is explored. Teachers focus their attention on just one meaning and all other suggestions are “ignored” or “reshaped” (Scott, et al., 2006, 610). As an inquiry tends towards convergence it moves away from open, independent inquiry and towards dependence on the teacher (Reed, 1992b, 150). Because the aim is to direct students to pre-decided understandings, the teacher will often have to manipulate or control the discussion so it goes in the desired direction. The teacher discourages independent thinking as this would take the discussion ‘off-track, and so students tend to play the game ‘guess what the teacher wants me to think’ rather than learning how to inquire for themselves.

On the other hand, a discussion is divergent to the extent that multiple answers and outcomes are acceptable. As an inquiry tends towards divergence, there are less and less restrictions on what counts as a proper or high quality suggestion and fewer and fewer standards for comparing and evaluating the merits of different suggestions. In a fully divergent discussion there are no restrictions on the answers that can be produced and all are of equal merit. Putting it colloquially, the more the discussion is divergent, the more anything goes. The discussion becomes so open that it ceases to be an inquiry and becomes just a chat.

Neither the fully convergent nor the fully divergent ends of the continuum require students to engage in independent inquiry. The convergent discussion requires students to develop an understanding of the answer chosen by the teacher, and discourages independent inquiry that diverges from this. The divergent discussion allows any answer and so there is no need to inquire or deliberate.

The CI strikes a balance between convergent and divergent discussions by allowing multiple answers with the restriction that they be reasonable or reflective. Unlike the teacher-directed discussion, multiple understandings are entertained and none is pre-decided to be the outcome of the inquiry. Unlike the free discussion, these understandings are critically evaluated. The aim in a CI is for the students to inquire together to develop better judgements about whatever topic they are exploring.

**Summary of the Community of Inquiry as constructivist discussion**

My aim in this section was to distinguish the CI from other constructivist discussions, so as to clarify the pedagogical context for the new conception of philosophical progress for P4C. Constructivist
discussions can involve anything from excessive direction towards the one ‘correct’ understanding decided by the teacher, where students lose their freedom, to a free-for-all where all answers are equally good, and where students are provided with no scaffolding to learn the skills of productive discussion.

![Figure 4: Elaborated continuum of constructivist discussions](image)

The CI sits in the middle of the continuum of constructivist discussions where it balances independence and structure. The teacher provides scaffolding so students learn to inquire for themselves, which in turn, enables student-led disciplined and productive inquiry. Students critically engage with the ideas of other students, follow the inquiry where it leads and form multiple reflective judgements rather than freely rambling or being led to the ‘correct’ understandings by their teacher.

Understanding the differences between a CI and a free or teacher-directed discussion is essential if P4C teachers are to enable their students to make philosophical progress. If they confuse the different types of constructivist discussion, they are likely to employ pedagogical actions that will block the possibility of autonomous philosophical progress because they effectively abandon or control their students. However P4C teachers also find it difficult to keep to the pedagogy of the CI in practice. Because there are only subtle distinctions between a CI and other kinds of discussion, even when P4C teachers understand the differences they find it difficult to stay in the middle ground of the CI and easily slip into one or the other extreme. They use inappropriate pedagogical actions not because they misunderstand the theory, but because they do not understand how to apply the theory in practice. The implication is that P4C teachers need a theoretical understanding of the CI pedagogy, and what Kennedy (2004, 754) calls a “macroposition” or “stance” they can take which enables them to stay true to this pedagogy. In chapter 8 I discuss what this stance should be like.

IV. Epistemic philosophical progress in the P4C literature

In the previous sections I described the pedagogical praxis of the CI and hinted at how this might support philosophical progress. In this final section I more closely examine what P4C commentators say about philosophical progress in the CI, and more importantly, what they do not say. The P4C literature refers to philosophical progress in a variety of ways:

- “discernible movement and growth” (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 79)
- “self-correcting inquiry” (Lipman, 2003, 197)
- “closure” (Lipman, 1988, 168; Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 135)
- “successive increments of understanding” (Lipman, et al., 1980, 112)
- a “progressive elaboration of ideas” (Lipman, et al., 1980, 175)
- an inquiry that builds (Lipman et al., 1980, 104; Burgh, et al., 2006, 165), is cumulative (Lipman, et al., 1980, 112), and emerges and grows (Lipman, et al., 1980, 104; Kennedy, 2004, 754).
However, I argue that these underlying conceptions of epistemic philosophical progress are inadequate because either epistemic progress is confused with other kinds of progress, or if there is a clear conception of epistemic philosophical progress, it is not fully developed.

Writers in the P4C tradition often focus only on what I call procedural progress, such as students having a better discussion, improving their thinking abilities or moving closer to the ideal of a CI. P4C texts include advice, tools and exercises for helping students to make procedural progress by moving from simple to complex thinking, from monologue to dialogue and from individualism to a CI, but they ignore epistemic philosophical progress. For instance, even though Wilks (1995, 55-61) includes a chapter called “Monitoring Progress”, and Rondhuis and Van der Leeuw (2000) title a paper “Performance and Progress in Philosophy”, both deal only with issues of procedural progress.

While developing better thinking and a mature CI is essential for P4C, I argue that an exclusive focus on procedural progress leads to what Murris (2008, 676) calls a “diluted form of P4C”. For a concentrated form of P4C, a clear and detailed conception of epistemic progress needs to be included in the P4C literature.

There are references to epistemic philosophical progress in the P4C literature, but these are often confused with procedural progress. Progress by correcting suggestions, refining ideas, and answering our questions is taken to be of the same kind as progress by getting better at inquiring together or becoming more skilful thinkers. For example, under the term “progress with learning”, Smith (2003) conflates epistemic philosophical progress indicated by the development of shared understandings and new perspectives (2003, 34), with procedural progress indicated by improvement in skills, attitudes and affectivity (2003, 38). Likewise in an appendix titled “How do we assess progress in philosophical discussion?” Fisher treats the improvement of student cognitive skills, and improving philosophical discussion, as being the same kind of thing as epistemic philosophical progress or getting better philosophical ideas (2003, 266-267).

I argue that because many P4C writers either ignore epistemic philosophical progress or conflate it with procedural progress, P4C practitioners in the classroom are sure to be making the same mistakes. This misunderstanding of epistemic progress contributes to the problems P4C faces in relation to philosophical progress.

Occasionally epistemic philosophical progress is clearly distinguished from other kinds of progress in the P4C literature. Yet this is infrequent, and while useful, the conceptions of epistemic philosophical progress that are presented are not sufficiently elaborated and provide little substantial guidance for practitioners. The following examples are representative:

A good discussion occurs in any subject when the net result or outcome of the discussion is discerned as marking a definite progress as contrasted with the conditions that existed when the episode began. Perhaps it is progress in understanding; perhaps it is progress in arriving at some sort of consensus; perhaps it is progress only in the sense of formulating the problem – but in any case, there is a sense of forward movement having taken place. Something has been accomplished; a group product has been achieved (Lipman, et al., 1980, 111).

The mark of a good dialogue, that is one with genuine depth and a discernible sense of progress, is that successive contributors will be taking into account, not only their own ideas about a topic under consideration, but the other comments, questions and thoughts that have emerged along the way (Splitter, 2006, 11).

In a similar example, Splitter and Sharp distinguish procedural closure (the sense of having improved our procedures) from epistemic philosophical progress (the sense of having got better ideas). They regard procedural closure as an inadequate measure of philosophical progress because:

\[ \text{See: Cam, 1995, 101-102; Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 128-129; Lipman, et al., 1980, 103, 110-113).} \]
It does not give students enough of a sense of progress with respect to the subject matter which stimulated the inquiry in the first place. If, as often happens, the inquiry is sparked by a problem or question raised by students, it would be appropriate for someone (again not necessarily the teacher) to ask ‘Have we come any closer to solving the problem or answering the question?’ Just when and how such meta-questions are framed or interpolated into the lesson is a matter for judgement by teachers and students, but participants in the inquiry will soon tire if they sense that there is no real interest in getting to the heart of the concerns which they have raised (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 134).

In my own work I have listed possible results of philosophical inquiry that are indicative of philosophical progress, such as creating a distinction or connection (see Golding, 2002, 10-11; 2006b). Yet, like other works in the P4C literature, my earlier attempts at articulating a conception of epistemic philosophical progress for P4C do not go far enough.

An alternative conception of epistemic philosophical progress in P4C is that we make progress by moving towards the truth. Philosophy is said to be seeking truth (Burgh, et al., 2006, 51) or is guided by the search for truth (Lipman, 1988, 148). The best statement of this conception comes from Gardner:

> Truth is absolutely essential to this method; it is only because of progress toward truth that participants are ultimately convinced of the fruitfulness of the process… If a Community of Inquiry is to be worthy of its name, it must make some progress toward “the truth” (1995, 38. See also Gardner, 1997 & 1998).

Although this is a clear statement about epistemic philosophical progress, it is also inadequate as a conception of philosophical progress for P4C. Because of the problematic nature of ‘truth’, it is not clear what it means to make progress towards ‘truth’, nor how we would know when we are moving towards it, nor when we have reached it. However, like the other conceptions of epistemic philosophical progress in the P4C literature, I argue that it can be developed into an adequate conception for P4C. I pay careful attention to this conception in chapters 4 and 7 where I argue that although a simple conception of progress by moving towards the truth is a poor conception, more sophisticated versions can be valuable (although in these conceptions ‘truth’ is no longer the operative measure of progress).

Perhaps the best statement of epistemic philosophical progress in P4C is given in Gregory’s *Philosophy for Children Practitioner Handbook* (2008). Epistemic philosophical progress is clearly distinguished from other kinds of progress and it is described less superficially and more concretely than in earlier P4C publications. However, Gregory’s two paragraphs dedicated to this issue do not yet constitute an adequate conception of epistemic progress.

The objective of classroom philosophy sessions is neither to find final answers to the questions that are raised, nor to reach complete agreement among the community. On the other hand, a genuine dialogue ‘moves forward’ in some sense that distinguishes it from mere lively conversation. Philosophy for children seeks two kinds of objectives: progress in coping with the philosophical questions – which might include adapted beliefs, new hypotheses for experiment or even clarification of the question – and growth in the cognitive and social procedures of inquiry (Gregory, 2008, 11).

What are the goals of philosophical dialogue in P4C? “Goals” here does not refer to the educational benefits of the program, like improved academic skills and social interaction, but rather the intended outcomes of the actual, particular dialogue that takes place in the program…. What counts as progress in such dialogues? … In Philosophy for Children the ideal immediate goal of a dialogue is for participants to arrive at one or more reasonable philosophical judgements regarding questions or issues that occasioned the dialogue (Gregory, 2008, 19).

The most common conception of epistemic philosophical progress in the P4C literature is that we make progress by following the inquiry where it leads rather than moving to pre-decided outcomes (Lipman,
2003, 22; Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 25). I argue that this suggestive conception incorporates everything else said about epistemic progress in the P4C literature, and is the seed of a thorough conception of philosophical progress for P4C.

In conclusion, the P4C literature explicitly states that the CI should make progress, but tends to confuse epistemic philosophical progress and procedural progress. When these are clearly distinguished, the conception of epistemic philosophical progress that is presented is superficially developed and needs to be further elaborated. So, although the P4C literature states that epistemic philosophical progress is important in P4C, there are no specific or detailed accounts of what this is.

Despite the confused and superficial treatment of philosophical progress in the P4C literature, it does provide the seed of a conception of philosophical progress. In chapter 3 I will isolate this seed from the superficially similar views of procedural progress. Then in part 2 of the thesis I will grow this seed to create a more precise, explicit and comprehensive conception that can be used to understand and promote epistemic philosophical progress in the P4C classroom.
3. Following the inquiry where it leads

A community of inquiry attempts to follow the inquiry where it leads rather than be penned in by the boundary lines of existing disciplines. A dialogue that tries to conform to logic, it moves forward indirectly like a boat tacking into the wind, but in the process its progress comes to resemble that of thinking itself (Lipman, 2003, 22).

The key point to be made here is that collaborative inquiry can and does make progress but, to borrow Lipman’s metaphor, it is the progress of a yacht tacking this way and that into the wind, rather than of an arrow speeding unerringly to a fixed and predetermined target. Although the yacht may not be taking place in a race to the finish, it nevertheless arrives somewhere eventually. However, this endpoint cannot be determined in advance of the arrival. Likewise the community of inquiry must ‘follow the inquiry where it leads’ (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 25).

The P4C literature suggests a possible conception of epistemic philosophical progress in the notion of following the inquiry where it leads. There are many possible paths that we can take in an inquiry, but we make progress by deliberately following the path of the inquiry as it unfolds rather than ignoring the path that is emerging and randomly making suggestions or moving to some pre-decided end-point.\textsuperscript{15}

In this chapter I unpack and describe this conception as it is presented in the P4C literature and then critically review its limitations. I examine the beginning point for inquiry in section I, and then describe the general direction to be followed in section II. Section III examines what is said about how we can stay on track and make progress in the general direction set out in section II. In each section I illustrate the conception of following the inquiry where it leads by expanding on the illustration of James’ P4C class discussing the issue of freedom from chapter 1. I also indicate where following the inquiry where it leads falls short as a conception of philosophical progress, and anticipate the expanded conception which I will develop. My conclusion will be that although it is inadequate as a conception of philosophical progress for P4C, following the inquiry where it leads can be further developed to produce a more adequate conception, which I will do in the second part of this thesis.

I. Inquiry begins with perplexing, problematic situations

According to Lipman, following Dewey, inquiry is stimulated by the situations we experience (2003, 85-86). We begin to follow the inquiry where it leads by responding to a situation we face. A situation is a complex whole or field that consists of objects or events, their context, and their relation to the experiencing subject (Dewey, 1938, ch4; Lipman, 2003, 86). Situations are picked out by their

\textsuperscript{15} This is expressed as following the argument (Lipman, 2003, 85 & 92), inquiry (Lipman, 2003, 22) or reasoning (Lipman, 1988, 14) where it leads. As well as the tacking-boat metaphor, following the inquiry is also described as being like navigating uncharted territory. We should keep on track, keep our bearings and avoid losing sight of what is under discussion so we do not wander aimlessly and get lost (Cam, 1995, 52-53; Burgh, et al., 2006, 190).
“immediately pervasive quality” (Dewey, 1938, ch4) or their “gestalt quality” (Lipman, 2003, 86), which represents “the moral or aesthetic character of a situation, often expressible through an adjective or an adverb, such as dismal or friendly or sad or graceful” (Lipman, 2004c, 4). This gestalt quality cannot be captured by an abstract description of what occurs, as the situation also includes full-blooded emotional and phenomenological qualities. Thus an example of a situation might be the frightening experience of walking at night with no other people around and then hearing a noise behind you.

It is the gestalt quality of situations that stimulates inquiry. In particular, we begin to inquire by responding to the perplexing quality of the situations we face (Lipman, 2003, 95-96; 2004c, 4).

The P4C literature, and its Deweyan foundation, offers a wealth of descriptions of the perplexing situations that can stimulate inquiry. A perplexing situation could be:

- “Unexpected, puzzling, peculiar,” “something that needs explanation,” (Dewey, 1933, ch18, §3)
- Doubtful, difficult, bewildering or enigmatic (Lipman, 2003, 95-96; Lipman, et al., 1980, 31)
- Incomplete or not whole (Cam, 2006a, 13; Lipman, 2003, 95-96; Lipman, et al., 1980, 31)
- Unsettling, troubling or provoking (Lipman, 2003, 95-96; Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 176)
- A moment of contradiction, disorganisation, and disorientation (Kennedy, 2004, 749, 754)
- Jumbled, pointless, unconnected to our lives or meaningless (Lipman, et al., 1980, 12)
- An aberration or discrepancy, “something that defies being taken for granted” (Lipman, 2003, 21)
- A forked-road situation (Dewey, 1933, 11)
- “disturbed, troubled, ambiguous … obscure” (Dewey, 1938, 109).

For example, James’ P4C class in chapter 1 faced the perplexing situation of whether the boy in the story they read was free or not. On one hand he seemed free because he was doing what he wanted, but on the other hand he seemed unfree because he couldn’t go outside due to his ill health. This is a perplexing situation for the students in James’ class, because they personally experience the tension between the boy appearing to be free and appearing to be unfree at the same time. They realise that there is something incomplete, confused and troubling here.

Although the P4C literature clearly describes the features of perplexing situations that stimulate inquiry, this is not sufficient for a conception of philosophical progress in P4C. Philosophical progress is often impeded in P4C because students try to inquire into perplexing situations that lack a philosophical dimension such as ‘How old was he?’ So, a conception of philosophical progress in P4C requires more detail about what counts as a philosophically perplexing situation to stimulate philosophical inquiry. Chapters 4 and 5 provide this detail by describing philosophical problems. Also a conception of philosophical progress needs more concrete details about how to identify philosophically perplexing situations. Chapter 5 addresses how P4C students can use philosophical questions to identify and articulate philosophically perplexing situations.

II. The direction to take for productive philosophical inquiry

Inquiry begins with a perplexing situation, but once we have started, how do we know which direction to take? The P4C literature also offers advice about the direction to take when following an inquiry where it leads. We move from:

- Simple to difficult; fuzzy to clear-cut; specific or experiential to general, impartial and comprehensive (Lipman, 1996, 68)
- Crude to sophisticated; unreflective to reflective (Lipman & Sharp, 1995, vii)
- Concrete to general; actual to possible (Lipman, et al., 1984, ii)
- Abstract or general to exemplification (Lipman in De Puig and Gomez, 2002, 51)
- Unsupported observation or opinion to formulating reasons and arguments (Fisher, 2003, 129).
For example, in the case of James’ class, the process of following the inquiry where it leads might involve moving from discussion of the specific and concrete issue of whether the boy in the story is free to a general discussion about freedom, the different situations where freedom is problematic, and the arguments for and against different definitions of freedom.

The varied advice about the direction a philosophically productive inquiry should take can be organised into two general principles commonly referred to by P4C commentators. First, the direction is away from perplexing situations and second, the direction is from the meaningless to the meaningful. Thus, in a productive inquiry we move from concrete to general, or from the fuzzy to the clear cut, because this is the way to move from a perplexing situation to a meaningful one. I will discuss both of these general principles in the rest of this section, giving more attention to the movement from meaningless to meaningful conceptions, just as the bulk of the P4C literature does.

**Move away from perplexing situations**

Lipman argues that the perplexing quality of situations lends a “sense of direction” to an inquiry (2003, 85-86). The direction is away from the perplexing, incomplete and incongruous and towards the whole, complete and congruous. In other words, we follow an inquiry where it leads by starting with the problematic and moving towards the resolved. For example, James’ class experienced a problem understanding whether the boy was free or not. This gave their inquiry a direction towards resolving the problem and this is the direction they take to follow the inquiry where it leads. In this respect, the P4C literature takes a Deweyan perspective on the direction of inquiry. Dewey states:

> Where there is no question of a problem to be solved or a difficulty to be surmounted, the course of suggestions flows on at random… But a question to be answered, an ambiguity to be resolved, sets up an end and holds the current of ideas to a definite channel. Every suggested conclusion is tested by its reference to this regulating end, by its pertinence to the problem in hand… *The nature of the problem fixes the end of thought, and the end controls the process of thinking* [italics in original] (1933, ch1, §3).

This is also similar to Peirce’s view of the direction taken in an inquiry: “With the doubt, therefore, the struggle begins, and with the cessation of doubt it ends” (1877, §IV).

Lipman describes this process of following the inquiry where it leads with the metaphor of responding to something that does not feel ‘right’. For example, we might feel that the painting in our living room is not right hanging where it is or perhaps the chair is in the wrong place. We move these things, taking into account not just the furniture that is already there, but the quality of the existing arrangement of what is there” (Lipman, 2003, 189). The wrongness of the situation provides direction and dictates what to do to make it right. We can similarly follow the inquiry where it leads by doing whatever will fit with the context so far and make the situation we face whole and complete.

An alternative metaphor is that of reflective equilibrium (Lipman, 2003, 197). When we experience a problematic situation we experience cognitive or reflective disequilibrium. Our conceptions are out of balance. The direction we follow is to put these conceptions back into balance again.

**Move towards meaning**

The direction of the inquiry in a CI is not only from problematic situations, but also towards meaningful situations. Meaning is obtained by making what was problematic ‘right’ or ‘complete’, and thus meaning is what results from following the inquiry where it leads (Lipman, 2003, 178-186; Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 130).¹⁶

There is a wide range of descriptions in the P4C literature of how meaning results from following the inquiry where it leads, and the rest of this sub-section will elaborate six of these. Each description gives

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¹⁶ This is expressed as making or finding meaning (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 68-71; Lipman 2003), meaningfulness (Lipman, et al., 1980, 16), or making sense (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 83 & 130; Lipman, et al., 1980, 174).
a different but complementary perspective on the direction we should take when following the inquiry where it leads from meaningless to meaningful.

1) **Meaning results when we deal with the problematic:** Meaning is the settlement or determination “of what was previously unsettled, indeterminate, or in some way problematic” (Lipman, 1991, 17). Under this conception, meaning can only result from removing the initial perplexity and transforming an initial problematic and meaningless situation into one that is meaningful. For example, James’ class makes meaning and hence follows the inquiry where it leads, to the extent that they can reconcile the two seemingly incompatible perspectives: the boy is free because he is doing what he wanted, but he is not free because he could not have done otherwise.

2) **Meaning results from interweaving mental frameworks:** We dispel our puzzlement and make meaning by organising our data, beliefs, concepts, experiences, values and thoughts into some larger construct such as a concept, framework, paradigm, perspective or world-view (Dewey, 1933, ch9, §2; Lipman, et al., 1980, 8, 74-77 & 79; Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 164). The result is new insight, illumination, apprehension, understanding and discernment (Burgh, et al., 2006, 72-74; Lipman, 2003, 86; Lipman, et al., 1980, 17). Splitter and Sharp describe this as a process of interweaving (1995, 83 & 131). For example, for James’ class to create a meaningful resolution to their problem about freedom they would need to create a new coherent concept of freedom that integrated and illuminated the example from the story as well as their own experiences of being free and unfree.

Furthermore, our frameworks are meaningful to the extent that they resolve what was problematic. We start with a meaningless situation, which is fragmented and pointless, and where our knowledge has no significance or is unconnected with our lives (Lipman, et al., 1980, 12). These are situations where our current mental frameworks do not make sense, are incomplete, lead to inconsistencies or are inconsistent with our information and experience. We make meaning by reframing to remove inconsistencies and fragmentation and to accommodate discrepant information, thus making our frameworks more unified, organised and complete.

One of the implications of this conception of meaning, argues Scolnicov, is the necessary connection between frameworks, problematic situations and meaning. Problematic situations only exist because our frameworks are incongruent with these situations (2000, 43), and these situations can only be resolved by creating new congruent frameworks. Frameworks are thus at the source of both lack of meaning and the creation of new meaning.

3) **Meaning results from establishing relationships and implications:** One important way of interweaving meaningful mental frameworks is by establishing relationships or connections (Lipman, et al., 1980, 17 & 67; Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 7 & 132). The relationships, connections and inferences we make between experiences, actions, perspectives and concepts constitute their meaning (Lipman 1988, 137; Lipman, et al., 1980, 16). “Each relationship, when discovered or invented, is a meaning, and great orders or systems of relationships constitute great bodies of meaning” (Lipman, 2003, 23). This is why interwoven frameworks are a good way to construct meaning. Frameworks provide the maximal number of links, connections and relationships and thus the greatest body of meaning.

In particular, the following relationships are taken to be meaning making:

- “Relations of expressions to other expressions; of expressions to things; of things to other things; of ideas to other ideas; of theory to practice; of parts to wholes” (Splitter and Sharp, 1995, 93)
- Means-consequence relationships (Dewey, 1933, ch9, §3)
- Putting things in context or as part of a whole (Lipman, et al., 1980, 67-81) which Lipman sometimes calls the aesthetic relationship of ‘rightness’ (1988, 135-136)
- Pragmatic relationships of use. The consequences or effects of an idea, or how it is used, supplies its meaning (Dewey, 1916, ch3; Lipman, 2003, 35).
By establishing such relationships we make meaning from an initial problematic situation. For example, James’ class could resolve their problem by examining the relationship between freedom and action, by examining how we use the term ‘freedom’ and by exploring the implications and inferences they can draw from different conceptions of freedom. For example, they might develop a new distinction between conceptions of freedom that shows the boy to be free under one conception but not free under another. Then the apparent contradiction, that he seemed free and unfree, could be dissolved.

4) Meaning results from establishing concepts: A second important way to interweave mental frameworks, according to the P4C literature, is to organise them around the concepts we use to make sense of the world (Lipman, et al., 1980, 25). The meaningful relationships and frameworks that we use to deal with problematic situations are all conceptual (Lipman, 2003, 184).

The P4C literature pays special attention to concepts because they can be both the source and the resolution of problematic situations, just like mental frameworks. Concepts can be inconsistent and incongruous, and so initiate inquiry, or they can enable us to organise information into meaningful wholes and relationships which dispel our initial puzzlement. For example, the concept of freedom is the source of the problem for James’ class, but when reconceptualised, it can also provide a resolution.

5) Meaning results from making justified reflective judgements: The P4C literature argues that inquiry should move from meaningless to meaningful situations, and I argue that this will form the seed of a conception of philosophical progress for P4C. However, one objection that might be raised is that this position does not rule out inquiry that moves towards irrational and unjustified ‘meanings’. As Gregory argues (2008, 20-21), the meanings sought in P4C must be personal in the sense that students have to find their own meanings, rather than having them imposed on them, and they have to be relevant to their personal experience. But this seems to imply that any sort of personal meaning would be acceptable. If this objection were justified, it would show that moving towards meaning should not be the basis for a conception of philosophical progress as it is really just a process of forming subjective preferences, not a way of getting epistemically better philosophical conceptions.

However, this objection is based on a misinterpretation of ‘meaning’. Although the meanings that result from following the inquiry where it leads must be personally significant, they must also be justified or reflective. ‘Meaning’ in P4C means ‘personally relevant reflective judgement’ and so unreflective subjective opinions do not count as meaningful. For example, if James’ class suggested a conception of freedom to deal with the problems they were discussing, their teacher would ask the class to consider the reasons why this might be a plausible conception of freedom, and then would ask them to consider possible counter-examples to test the conception. Her intention would be to winnow out erroneous ‘meanings’ that are, for example, based on poor reasoning, subjective opinion, inaccurate evidence or jumping to a conclusion. Only a conception that has passed such tests would count as meaningful.

P4C’s conception of meaningfulness should also be distinguished from the results of successful indoctrination. Someone’s indoctrinated beliefs may form the conceptual framework that they use to make sense of everything else but they do not count as justified meaning. What is required for meaningfulness in the sense that P4C employs this term, is that our personally meaningful frameworks are made up of reflective and justified inferences or reasoned connections, not unreflective and untested assumptions or ideology. We develop meaning by uncovering and resolving problems involved in the situations we face, not by glossing over them or ignoring them because of attachment to dogma.

6) Meaning results from discovery and creation: The P4C literature also argues that meaning is both made and found, and so moving towards reflective meaning is a process of discovery and creation (Lipman, et al., 1980, 95).

This conception locates meaning between radical constructivism, subjectivism or relativism on one hand and objectivism or absolutism on the other. As argued in the previous sub-section, meaning is not an a-rational, subjective construction. Yet, nor are there objective, ‘true’ or ‘real’ meanings that can be
found fully formed and waiting to be discovered, because meaning is personal and requires active interpretation and conceptualising. Thus for P4C meaning is both discovered and created.

There is a world ‘out there’ to be discovered, but … persons bring to the discovery a host of assumptions, categories, ideas, perspectives, which themselves colour what they discover. In a sense they invent and discover at the same time (Sharp, 1987, 41).

As I have already argued in chapters 1 and 2, P4C is a constructivist pedagogy. This implies that P4C students must construct or build their own meaning and cannot be given it, or find it, ready made. They create meaning by actively:

- Connecting new observations and insights into mental frameworks (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 72)
- Organising beliefs, values and thoughts (Lipman, et al., 1980, 74)
- Interweaving their opinions, ideas and experiences (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 131)
- Making judgements and inferences (Lipman, et al., 1980, 17; Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 76)
- Putting things together in a way that makes sense of them (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 74).

However, moving towards meaning in P4C is also a process of discovery where P4C students find meaning (Lipman, et al., 1980, 67-68; Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 68, 71-76, 83, 93). They discover how different conceptions and experiences can be interwoven, discover new meaningful connections, relationships and implications, and discover which conceptions work within the brute constraints of what we find out about reality and logic.

### Summary of the direction to take for productive philosophical inquiry

In this section I gave more specific details about what direction to take to follow an inquiry where it leads. We follow an inquiry away from perplexing situations, which are incomplete and meaningless, and towards making them complete and meaningful. However, any inquiry - scientific, historical or philosophical - could be described as moving from perplexity to meaning. For an adequate conception of philosophical progress, I have to show what is distinctive about philosophical inquiry. This will be addressed in chapter 4 when I put forward the problem-resolution conception of philosophy. An adequate conception of philosophical progress also requires more specific details about how we can recognise when we have philosophical meaning, which will also be addressed in chapter 4.

‘Following the inquiry where it leads’ is also inadequate as a conception of philosophical progress because it suggests that progress should be understood as moving from one place to another. However, there are other important ways of understanding how we ‘make sense’, as suggested by Eco’s metaphor:

> There are two ways of walking through a wood. The first is to try one of several routes (so as to get out of the wood as fast as possible, say, or to reach the house of grandmother, Tom Thumb, or Hansel and Gretel); the second is to walk so as to discover what the wood is like and find out why some paths are accessible and others are not (1994, 27).

We can make sense of a problematic situation by wandering through the intellectual terrain, sometimes taking one path and sometimes taking another, going over the same ground many times in different directions and in different conditions, and sometimes going off the track entirely just to see what is there. In this way we make progress by getting an overview, map, or the lie of the land, rather than by following an inquiry from one place to another. The metaphor of following the inquiry where it leads is inadequate as a conception of philosophical progress because it does not leave room for this kind of progress. However, I will show that the expanded problem-resolution conception of philosophy in chapter 4 is adequate to account for such progress by exploration.

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17 In chapters 4 and 7 I will further explore how a conception of philosophical progress in P4C can find the middle ground between the two extremes of subjective construction and objective discovery.
III. Staying on track and moving forward

Knowing the direction to take in an inquiry is one thing, being able to stay on track is another. In this section I consider what the P4C literature says about how we should proceed when we follow an inquiry where it leads from the incomplete and incongruous to the complete and congruous.

There are three main, interrelated, accounts in the P4C literature about how to proceed in an inquiry. It is argued that: 1) P4C inquiry is self-propelling and carries students along; 2) inquiry sometimes proceeds according to the dictates of logic and sometimes proceeds chaotically; and 3) there is an intuitive art to following the inquiry where it leads. I will first present an illustration of following the inquiry where it leads, based on these three accounts, then I will discuss each individually. My conclusion will be that even with these three elaborations, the P4C literature does not provide a comprehensive conception of philosophical progress in P4C. In particular, there needs to be more explicit detail about how to distil a line of philosophical inquiry to follow, and about how participants in P4C inquiry can judge what to do next to move forward.

Box 8: Illustration of following the inquiry where it leads

James’ class was trying to decide whether the boy in their story was free or not. They were perplexed because on one hand he seemed free because he was doing what he wanted – staying inside. But on the other hand, he seemed unfree because he was too sick to go outside even if he wanted to.

James said that maybe the boy was free in one way but not in another. “We should make a distinction between different kinds of freedom,” he suggested.

Simon spoke next. “I thought the law was important. Legally, this is a free country.”

The rest of the class seemed confused by Simon’s suggestion, but it helped Amy develop a new idea. “Simon’s idea makes me think that maybe the boy in the story was legally free but not physically free.”

Alicia challenged this: “But he was still just a kid so he wasn’t legally free. He can’t drink or drive.”

“But he can drink or drive,” John said, following the inquiry one step forward. “He’d just get in big trouble for doing it. Just because something is illegal, doesn’t mean you can’t do it.”

James’ had a flash of insight: “Maybe there’s two different ways of saying he can do something. He can’t physically go outside but he legally can. He can physically drink and drive, but he can’t legally.”

Mrs. Adams, the teacher, asked: “What does this tell us about whether the boy was free or not?”

“I reckon Amy was right” James concluded. “The boy was legally free to go outside but not physically free to go outside. So in one way he was free and in another he wasn’t.”

Alisha was still puzzled. “That’s interesting and everything, but it doesn’t help me understand whether he was free when he chose to stay inside.”

This illustrates what is called a self-propelling inquiry. Students follow the inquiry by responding to the issues and questions raised by each suggestion. For example, James’ suggestion to distinguish different types of freedom both resolves the initial problem and creates a new problem to resolve: What are the different kinds of freedom? Each suggestion made in the inquiry follows a reasonable or logical sequence. For example, Amy suggests a distinction in response to James’ suggestion that there are different ways of being free. Although the distinction seemed sound, Alicia saw a possible flaw in Amy’s view, which she challenged. After that James attempted to improve the distinction to deal with Alicia’s challenge. Despite normally involving a logical progression, the inquiry also sometimes leapt forward seemingly arbitrarily. For example, Simon’s reference to the law, while seemingly off the point, led to a new distinction between legal and physical freedom and helped the inquiry to progress. There are multiple paths that students could have followed, but rather than follow predetermined rules or a fixed path, they make discerning judgements about which path might move them forward towards wholeness and completeness (though they haven’t reached this yet). They also show what Kennedy
(1994, 9) calls “self-discipline and sacrifice” as they pick out and follow one line of co-inquiry rather than pursuing their own separate points of views or agendas.

This illustration can be contrasted with two examples of not following an inquiry (which correspond to the teacher-directed and free discussions from chapter 2). If a discussion follows a pre-decided agenda that ignores the path that was emerging from student contributions, for example, by directing students to consider the positions of hard determinism and compatibilism irrespective of what students say, then this is not following the inquiry where it leads. A second example of not following the inquiry occurs when student contributions are based on stream of consciousness or a random succession of ideas, such as anecdotes about when they were free, or about movies where people were not free. Although these suggestions might be on the inquiry topic, they are a mere sequence of ideas rather than an inquiry where each suggestion is a “con-sequence” of previous suggestions (Dewey, 1933, 4).

1) Inquiry is self-propelling

The inquiry in P4C is said to be self-propelling for two main reasons: First, the perplexing situation that initiates an inquiry provides the overall stimulus and direction for the inquiry, and motivates participants to continue to move in this direction. Second, each move made in the inquiry raises new problems which prompt further movement. Thus students are able to keep on track and moving forward because each step taken generates a new perplexing situation which demands a further step to be taken.

Inquiry is self-propelling because problematic situations, once experienced, demand a resolution and provide ongoing motivation for following an inquiry where it leads. The un-rightness of a situation compels us to do something to improve the situation in the same way that we cannot leave a painting crooked on the wall. The incomplete and unbalanced situation is unsatisfying and demands a satisfying completion and equilibrium (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 18). For example, once James’ class had experienced the contradiction of the boy seeming to be free and not free at the same time, they were intellectually compelled to resolve it.

P4C students know what to do next in their self-propelling inquiry because every action taken leads to a new perplexing situation that demands to be resolved, or as Kennedy says, “generates some requiredness” (1999, 347). As illustrated above, a line of inquiry slowly emerges as each inquiry move raises new questions, problems and issues and thus stimulates the next move to answer the questions, and resolve the problems and issues. Participants follow an inquiry where it leads by being led forward from one problematic situation to another in this dialectic fashion.

Dewey uses the metaphor of a plant sending forth new shoots to explain the self-propelling nature of following the inquiry where it leads (1933, ch18, §3). Lipman uses two different metaphors: It is like a writer, halfway through a book, finding that it dictates what must be written (2003, 89). Alternatively it is like throwing ourselves off balance when walking.

You move forward by constantly throwing yourself off balance. When you walk, you never have both feet solidly on the ground at the same time. Each step forward makes possible a further step forward; in a dialogue, each argument evokes a counterargument that pushes itself beyond the other and pushes the other beyond itself (2003, 87).

Kennedy provides two further metaphors: The self-propelling forward movement in an inquiry “involves a falling out of previous balance in order to establish one on a higher level. Inquiry progresses through continual disruptions” (1994, 10). The contradictions and problems that emerge in the inquiry provide energy for ongoing inquiry, and participants “interact with this energy the way a sailor interacts with the wind, or a surfer with the waves” (2004, 759).

2) Following an inquiry where it leads is sometimes logical and sometimes chaotic

Inquiry is self-propelling according to the dictates of logic (Lipman, 2003, 92). Therefore students can judge how to proceed by following the logical consequence of each inquiry move. Lipman explains this logical path of the self-propelling inquiry in the following:
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 [1938] correctly identifies logic with the methodology 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 and supporting moves. As subsidiary issues are settled, the community’s sense of direction is confirmed and clarified, and the inquiry proceeds with renewed vigour (2003, 92-93).

The logical movement of an inquiry is not restricted to the moves of formal logic. It is something more akin to informal logic, critical thinking, inquiry logic, or reasoning in the broadest sense. This is illustrated in the self-propelling inquiry in James’ class where students respond to contributions by making logical moves such as drawing distinctions, challenging assumptions and revising conceptions. Yet the P4C literature also acknowledges that productive inquiry is not always logical and can proceed chaotically by unpredictable leaps, branchings, recursions and the emergence of apparently unrelated material (Kennedy, 1999b, 347; 2004, 754). Going outside the ‘logical’ and going ‘off-track’ can be the best way to reach a meaningful resolution of a problem. This is similar to surfing the web where we jump around in a seemingly chaotic fashion, but still advance our inquiry (Burbules, 2000a).

Yet this ‘chaotic’ aspect of inquiry cannot be fully captured by ‘following an inquiry where it leads’. If progress can be a result of “spontaneity, chance, and emergent combination” (Kennedy, 1999b, 344), then we can make progress by travelling down unintended paths and discovering unexpected insights that have nothing to do with the original problem we were pursuing. So, rather than following an inquiry where it leads, we can make progress by stumbling on side-issues, tangents and creative suggestions that are off-track from the original inquiry, but which advance our current inquiry (or a new inquiry) in unforeseen directions. Therefore the conception of following the inquiry where it leads is too narrow to encompass philosophical progress in P4C, so I elaborate it in chapters 4 and 6 to make room for unexpected progress on unintentional lines of inquiry.

3) The discerning art of following the inquiry where it leads

Because following the inquiry where it leads is sometimes logical and sometimes chaotic and there are always multiple choices about how to proceed, the P4C literature also argues that following the inquiry where it leads is an intuitive art requiring wisdom, discernment and judgement (Lipman, 2003, 86 & 208). To follow an inquiry where it leads, we must make discerning judgements about the demands of the situations we face, and we have to artfully choose, orchestrate and sequence philosophical moves such as justifying, or suggesting alternatives, to meet these demands. Doing this requires keeping the whole inquiry in mind, past, present and future. It involves:

…as much imagining a whole as recognising one… always looking for the boundaries, markers, and larger pieces of the argument, and to their junctures, seams, shifts, and transformations… [It involves] paying attention to the elements of the structure that are in contradiction, for it is these elements that represent its transformational potential (Kennedy, 2004, 758).

Put in a different way, we follow the inquiry where it leads by first distilling the essence of the inquiry, and then by keeping the integrity of this inquiry, so that everything we discuss forms a well connected, integrated whole (Cam, 1995, 52; Lipman, et al., 1980, 45).

Following the inquiry where it leads is thus similar to Aristotle’s view in the Nicomachean Ethics about how to follow the doctrine of the mean. To paraphrase Aristotle, to follow the inquiry where it leads we
have to say the right thing, at the right time, for the right motive and in the right way (bk2, §9). We have to suggest the right idea when it will help us to move the inquiry forward from the problematic to the meaningful (and not before or after) and we have to do this in the right way (not sarcastically or aggressively), with the right aim or motive (not put forward as a joke or to crush all opposition). Lipman says something similar when referring to Paul Grice’s ‘cooperative principle’: “Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged” (1989, 26). “In other words,” Lipman writes, “Grice advises us to allow the requiredness that we sense in the conversation to dictate to us just how and when we are to make our contribution” (2003, 88).

The problem of judging what to do next to follow an inquiry where it leads

The conception of following the inquiry where it leads gives a detailed account of the direction we need to take, and how to proceed, if we are to make progress. Yet in this sub-section I argue that it is inadequate as a conception of philosophical progress for P4C because it does not sufficiently explain how participants in a P4C inquiry can judge what to do next to follow the inquiry where it leads.

If the requiredness of the problematic situation only gave us one option for moving forward, or if productive inquiry proceeded only in simple, obvious, logical steps, then following the inquiry where it leads, and hence making philosophical progress, might be straightforward. However, judging what to do to move forward is never clear-cut for three main reasons:

1) There are always several different paths we can take to follow an inquiry where it leads and resolve a problematic situation. Multiple logical steps could be taken in response to the ‘requiredness’ of any point in an inquiry, only some of which will ultimately be productive. We could make a distinction, or a connection, or offer a counter-example, but how do we know which move to make?

2) P4C involves collaborative inquiry where numerous points of view and lines of inquiry are suggested, which makes it difficult to distil one main line of inquiry which everyone in the community will pursue. This is especially difficult in a new community where students find it difficult to work together or stick to one point and instead every person suggests whatever idea occurs to them.

3) Because of the sometimes chaotic nature of the inquiry it is difficult to distinguish what is actually off-track and what only seems to be but which will help move the inquiry forward. How can we tell whether a seemingly irrelevant suggestion is going to move the discussion forward in the same way that the sailor knows that tacking away from where they want to go will put wind in their sails and ultimately help them move forward?

Because judging how to proceed in philosophical inquiry is so complex, the advice to follow the inquiry where it leads is inadequate. According to various P4C writers, to proceed in philosophical inquiry students should use wisdom, discernment and judgement, follow the logical requiredness of the situation, and keep the integrity of the inquiry. Even though this is an accurate description of how philosophical experts follow an inquiry where it leads, it is next to useless for philosophically novice P4C teachers and students. It does not provide practical advice about how to judge what to do next to follow the inquiry and hence is inadequate as a conception of philosophical progress for P4C.

The P4C literature does include some practical advice about how to ‘keep your bearings’ in the middle of a complex inquiry, but I argue that this is also insufficient. For example, Cam (1993a, 11) advises that we should ask ourselves the following sorts of questions during an inquiry: How does what was said connect with what we have been discussing? Does that help with the problem we are looking at? What have we talked about today? Have we answered the question? What have we done and what should we do next? Stanley and Bowkett (2005, 69) offer similar advice: The P4C teacher should keep track of “the progress made in thinking … Where did it start? What paths of inquiry were followed? Where did it finish? How will you follow it up?” This sort of advice, while useful, does not give sufficient concrete advice about how to decide what to do next in a philosophical inquiry, and so is merely the seed of a conception of how to make philosophical progress in P4C.
An adequate conception of philosophical progress for P4C should provide practical support for novice philosophy teachers and students attempting to follow the inquiry where it leads. I will provide this practical account in chapter 6 when I examine the philosophical inquiry process in more detail. I will present a heuristic and propaedeutic framework for co-inquiry that novice philosophers can use to judge what to do next in a philosophical inquiry, thus enabling them to make philosophical progress.

IV. Summary of following the inquiry where it leads

I have argued that following the inquiry where it leads is the seed of a conception of philosophical progress for P4C. To make philosophical progress we move away from perplexing situations that do not make sense and towards new meaningful, complete, conceptual frameworks. We follow the inquiry where it leads by uncovering problematic situations and then finding and constructing frameworks of concepts and relationships that provide meaningful resolutions. The inquiry proceeds sometimes logically and sometimes chaotically, but it moves forward, propelled by our need to move from perplexity to meaningfulness.

Yet, I have also argued that the conception of following the inquiry where it leads does not yet provide an adequate conception of philosophical progress for P4C. There are three major problems that must first be addressed. I will summarise these problems and then indicate how, in part 2 of the thesis, I will resolve them and develop a comprehensive conception of philosophical progress for P4C.

First, the Deweyan conception of following the inquiry where it leads is not specific about the process of philosophical inquiry and especially where we begin and the outcomes we move towards. In chapter 4 I describe the philosophically perplexing situations that stimulate philosophical inquiry as ‘philosophical problems’ and the philosophical meaning we seek as ‘philosophical resolutions’.

Second, the conception provides little or no guidance for novices. It requires expert judgement and discernment to follow an inquiry where it leads, so a conception of philosophical progress for P4C must provide more explicit scaffolding so P4C teachers and students can come to develop this expertise. Chapter 5 presents a useful conception of philosophical questions as the means of identifying and articulating philosophically perplexing situations to inquire about. Chapter 6 will give concrete details about the structure of the philosophical inquiry process itself, and particularly how to decide what to do next to advance the inquiry.

Note that these two problems are in tension. The conception of following the inquiry where it leads must be made more sophisticated to account for the complexity of philosophical inquiry, but to make it useable by novice child philosophers, it must also be simplified. This is an extra difficulty to be overcome in developing my conception of philosophical progress for P4C.

The third reason why following the inquiry where it leads is inadequate as a conception of philosophical progress is that it does not encompass every important way of making progress. We can make progress by exploring the intellectual terrain, rather than following a path somewhere, and by gaining unexpected insights, rather than intentionally moving from problem to resolution. In chapters 4 and 6 I show how a conception of philosophical progress for P4C can encompass each of these ways of making progress.

In conclusion, my aim in part two of this thesis is to take ‘following the inquiry where it leads’ as a seed that I will grow to create a more explicit and efficacious conception of philosophical progress that can be used to understand and promote philosophical progress in P4C. I will argue that following the inquiry where it leads in P4C should be understood as moving from philosophical problem to philosophical resolution through a process of inquiry, achieving milestones on the path.
Part 2

A new conception of philosophical progress for Philosophy for Children
4. The problem-resolution conception of philosophy

It is possible to raise and solve philosophical problems with no very clear idea of what philosophy is, what it is trying to do, and how it can best do it; but no great progress can be made until these questions have been asked and some answers to them given (Collingwood, 2005, 4).

Although Philosophy for Children needs a conception of philosophical progress, following the inquiry where it leads is not adequate, so, in this chapter I develop a new conception of philosophical progress. I argue that epistemic philosophical progress should be understood as the movement from philosophical problem to resolution. If P4C students conceive of philosophical progress in this way, then they will be able to more easily understand and make philosophical progress. I start section I by discussing why a conception of philosophical progress is so problematic. How can we reconcile the lack of general or lasting agreement in philosophy with the possibility of philosophical progress? I then examine three metaphilosophical positions that are contenders for providing this reconciliation. One position is that philosophy does not progress but merely expresses the changing tastes and temperaments of different philosophers. At the other extreme is the position that philosophy makes progress by uncovering the objective truth. I opt for a position between these extremes: We make philosophical progress when we provide philosophical resolutions to philosophical problems. I call this the problem-resolution conception of philosophy.

I expand on the problem-resolution conception by examining philosophical problems in section II and then philosophical resolutions in section III. Philosophical problems, I argue, are inadequate or incongruous conceptions. Even though they cannot be settled once and for all, they can be resolved by transforming our conceptions so they are congruous and adequate. Another way of putting this is that philosophical problems arise when our conceptions do not make sense, and we resolve them by creating new meaningful conceptions within which the original problem no longer arises. In section IV, to show that it is a fitting way to conceptualise philosophy, I illustrate how the problem-resolution form is exemplified in the work of key, influential philosophers such as Socrates, Hegel and Wittgenstein, and by philosophical positions taken on contemporary philosophical problems such as reductionism, eliminativism, instrumentalism, quietism and coining concepts. I explicitly detail the conception of philosophical progress implied by the problem-resolution conception in section V. For the greater part of this chapter my attention will be on developing a defensible conception of philosophical progress and I do not specifically address P4C. However, in section VI, I show how this conception removes the impediments to progress that P4C faces.

I. Philosophical disagreement and a metaphilosophical response

Philosophy is characterised by seemingly endless controversy and the absence of settled, definitive conclusions. Multiple conflicting answers are offered to the same philosophical question, positions that
are accepted by some are rejected by others, and positions that were overturned find favour again. There is not even agreement about which are the legitimate questions to ask.

This picture of philosophy seems to leave no room for philosophical progress. But this is perplexing given how many people pursue philosophy, both formally and informally, and who seem legitimately satisfied by what is achieved. The problem then is whether it is possible to reconcile a perception of philosophy as irrevocably contestable with a conception of philosophical progress.

To attempt such a reconciliation I must show how there can be philosophical progress despite appearances. I first examine three metaphilosophical options about philosophical progress, and then argue that what I call a realistic position is the best. Next I argue that a realistic position should be based on a conception of philosophy that is inclusive of philosophical diversity. I finish by outlining and illustrating a defensible, realistic and inclusive position, the problem-resolution conception of philosophy, which I argue will form the basis for a conception of philosophical progress for P4C.

The metaphilosophical options about philosophical progress

In response to philosophical controversy, there are three metaphilosophical positions that could be taken about the possibility of philosophical progress:

1. **Idealistic**: We make progress as we (eventually) get to the truth. This position, typical of Plato and Hegel, holds that philosophy makes progress towards final, definitive answers. Peirce’s (1934b) pragmaticist view that ‘truth’ would eventually emerge from an inquiry that lasted long enough is also idealistic, as is Habermas’ (1972) similar view of truth as ideal consensus. Some P4C writers have also supported idealistic conceptions: Philosophy is said to be seeking truth (Burgh, et al., 2006, 51) or guided by the search for truth (Lipman, 1988, 148) and philosophy makes progress toward the truth (Gardner, 1995, 38).

2. **Pessimistic**: Philosophy cannot make epistemic progress and only produces endless change and disagreement. William James’ view of philosophy as merely the tastes and temperaments of philosophers is pessimistic about epistemic philosophical progress, as are sceptical or nihilistic positions where philosophical questions and answers are taken to be meaningless, unsolvable or illegitimate. There is also a range of pessimistic positions based on strong psychological, historical or sociological explanations of philosophical agreements and disagreements.

3. **Realistic**: Philosophy produces something of epistemic value, but not final, definitive conclusions. This position, typical of Nicholas Rescher’s “orientational pluralism” (1978, 2006), holds that philosophy can make progress, contra the pessimistic view, but it is realistic about what philosophy can produce, contra the idealistic view. Under a realistic conception of philosophical progress, there can be tentative, changing, plural philosophical advances that are more than mere changes, but less than absolute truths.\(^\text{18}\)

I reject both the idealistic and pessimistic positions in favour of the realistic position, because the realistic position is in greater equilibrium with our important conceptions about philosophy, while the other positions are needlessly inconsistent. It is generally accepted (by those who know philosophy at least) that philosophy is a worthwhile endeavour, and that it produces epistemically valuable products such as new positions and arguments. The realistic position supports these two statements, while the idealistic and pessimistic positions are unnecessarily incompatible with them, implying that philosophy is epistemically pointless while ignoring the legitimate, achievable epistemic advances of philosophy.

\(^\text{18}\) It is ambiguous how we should classify metaphilosophical positions such as Rorty’s view of philosophy as an edifying discourse. In some ways it seems pessimistic about epistemic philosophical progress because it implies that all philosophy can achieve is to carry on an edifying conversation. However, because Rorty sees “edification” as the “project of finding new, better, more interesting, more fruitful ways of speaking” (1979, 360), this position may be more realistic than pessimistic. If edification leads to epistemically better ways of speaking, then this is a realistic position, but if they are merely socially or aesthetically better ways of speaking, then it is pessimistic.
If either the pessimistic or idealistic position were adopted, we would have to reject as illusory the seemingly legitimate sense of epistemic purpose and achievement we have from pursuing philosophy, and accept the conclusion that there is no epistemic point to philosophy. The pessimistic position leads to this because it rejects the possibility of any epistemic philosophical progress. If we cannot make any progress, why bother philosophising? The idealistic position also leads to the same conclusion: Because truth is an epistemic standard that is impossible to meet, the idealistic position implies that we cannot make, judge, or verify philosophical progress. Final, settled truth is an unattainable ideal in philosophy, as even the most certain of philosophical conclusions can be legitimately challenged. Even if it were possible to attain philosophical truth, we have not and could not verify that we have done so, and could not even tell if we had moved closer, because we do not have the independent access to the truth that is needed to measure the distance between our current conception and the true conception. So the idealistic position also implies that philosophy is epistemically pointless. Why philosophise if we have made no progress for thousands of years, and could not tell even if we had?

There is good reason to reject the pessimistic and idealistic positions and their implications that there is no epistemic point to philosophy, because both positions ignore the legitimate and achievable epistemic standards of philosophy that could be used to indicate philosophical progress. The idealistic position measures progress using the unnecessarily strict standards of truth and falsity. The pessimistic position employs standards that are unnecessarily lax, in fact rejecting all epistemic standards for judging philosophical progress. They both ignore a source of legitimate epistemic standards based on the epistemic products of philosophy, such as new or refined arguments, questions, and positions, as well as what Moody (1986, 45) calls a necrology of failed positions and arguments.

My conclusion is that a realistic conception of philosophical progress is better than a pessimistic or idealistic conception. The realistic position, unlike the others, acknowledges that philosophy does result in epistemic achievements, thus explaining why philosophy is a sensible endeavour to pursue, and making better sense of our past and current pursuit of philosophy. We better understand philosophical progress by considering the realistic achievements of philosophy rather than by considering whether or not philosophy reaches the truth (which I argue is an inappropriate measure for philosophical progress). An objection might be that I have only considered simple, straw-men versions of idealistic and pessimistic positions and ignored the more nuanced versions that philosophers actually advocate. For example, by employing epistemic criteria such as logical coherence, harmony with other conceptions or the empirical data, absence of fallacies or strength of logical support we could have a legitimate idealistic position for judging progress on the path to truth, or a legitimate pessimistic position for judging progress despite the absence of truth.

In reply I argue that such sophisticated positions only present legitimate conceptions of philosophical progress because they are surreptitious realistic positions. Under these positions we make progress as we achieve something in philosophy, such as the removal of a fallacy or the development of a coherent position, but these are realistic criteria for judging progress. The idealistic claim to ‘Truth’ or the pessimistic claim that there are no universal, impartial standards, are merely irrelevant battle-cries or unnecessary statements of faith with no epistemic substance in relation to philosophical progress. It is the realistic criteria that do all the work.

I do not reject the idealistic and pessimistic positions because they are false and the realistic position is true (which would be to adopt an idealistic position). I reject them because, in the face of philosophy’s inability to produce settled truths, they are poor ways to understand philosophy and philosophical progress while the realistic position is a justifiably better conception of philosophical progress. I cannot offer proof that the realistic position is better (as that would also be part of the idealistic enterprise of seeking truth), but I can offer good reasons for taking it to be a better position. Because it acknowledges the achievements and products of philosophy as progress, the realistic position provides the best and

For example, even the principle of non-contradiction can be challenged by paraconsistent logic (Priest, 2006).
simplest explanation of the worth of philosophy, while the idealistic and pessimistic positions ignore important results of philosophy and make it inexplicable why anyone would engage in philosophy.\textsuperscript{20} Despite this initial rejection of idealistic and pessimistic positions about philosophical progress, I will revisit them in a postscript at the end of this chapter. Once the realistic position is fully developed I will argue that there is a back door through which they can return in a different form.

The problem-resolution conception of philosophy

A realistic position about philosophical progress must be based on a conception of philosophy where the epistemic aim of philosophy is realistically achievable, and distinct from reaching final truth. I begin to develop this conception in this sub-section.

I will attempt to make this realistic conception of philosophical progress compatible with as many types of philosophical practice as possible, and I will not stipulate that only some practices count as ‘real’ philosophy. Yet I acknowledge that there may only be family resemblances between some types of philosophy, and an attempt to articulate what is in common to \textit{all} philosophy is likely to be inadequate, if only because a full understanding of every philosopher and tradition of philosophy is the work of several lifetimes. Nevertheless, I believe that attempting to be inclusive is better than arrogantly holding that philosophy as practised in one time and place is the full extent of philosophy.

I argue that the epistemic aim common to all philosophy is to resolve philosophical problems, and based on this, I advocate the problem-resolution conception of philosophy. We make philosophical progress by moving from philosophical problems to philosophical resolutions and the various products of philosophy such as questions, positions and arguments, are milestones in the overall progress. This provides a realistic and inclusive conception of philosophy, which replaces the conception of following the inquiry where it leads, and offers a sound basis for a conception of philosophical progress for P4C.

The problem-resolution conception analyses philosophy according to the inquiry process from problem to resolution, not according to its “bare results.” As Dewey (1938, 16) and Hegel (1807, preface §3) argue, knowledge, conclusions and results can only be understood as part of the inquiry process from which they originate.\textsuperscript{21} So, I analyse philosophy according to what is distinctive about philosophical inquiry, and I analyse philosophical inquiry according to its distinctive problems and resolutions.

From the realistic perspective of the problem-resolution conception, and in the spirit of Goodman and Elgin’s (1988) reconception of philosophy, when we philosophise we attempt to resolve problems, not find truths. There are similarities between these activities just as there are between Australian Rules, Rugby, and American football, but, to extend the metaphor, they are different games with different rules, methods of play and most importantly, ways of scoring. In philosophy we score by resolving philosophical problems, not by reaching settled truths. There is philosophical progress every time a warranted, defensible position is developed that resolves a philosophical problem. This is a score in the philosophical game, even if it is it is a tentative and fallible position and even if there are legitimate alternatives. There is also progress as we move closer to scoring a goal, such as by asking new questions, producing new positions and arguments, extending and clarifying possible positions and rejecting failed positions. In the game of philosophical inquiry these are like conversions, penalties or gaining possession of the ball. In section V I say more about these aspects of philosophical progress, and how they fit within the problem-resolution framework when I discuss how we can make philosophical progress by completing the various tasks of philosophy.

\textsuperscript{20} I also reject pessimistic and idealistic conceptions for P4C because they tend to impede progress in P4C sessions. Idealistic conceptions tend to lead P4C students to dogmatism while pessimistic positions lead students to radical relativism. I will discuss these issues further in chapter 7.

\textsuperscript{21} This is contrary to the approach taken by Hirst and Phenix in the ‘forms of knowledge’ literature. They argued that there we can analyse subject areas or disciplines according to the ‘forms of knowledge’ (Hirst, 1974; Hirst & Peters, 1970) or ‘realms of meaning’ (Phenix, 1964a, 1964b) they produce. For example, Hirst argues that we analyse history, physics or philosophy, by the types of true propositions or statements they produce (1974, 5).
The philosophical problem of freewill provides a classic illustration of the problem-resolution conception. The problem occurs because of an incongruity between our conceptions of freedom and determinism. Being free seems to require that what we do is not caused or made to happen by something outside our control. The scientific world-view, however, seems to imply that everything that happens, including what we think are free choices, is determined by forces outside our control. The apparent incompatibility of these two conceptions is the philosophical problem that we need to resolve.

One way we might resolve this problem is by taking a compatibilist position and transforming our conception of freedom so that it is compatible with our choices and actions ultimately being determined by outside causes. This resolution takes an action to be free when done from our own beliefs and desires, even if our genes or environment have determined these. The original problem thus disappears because our new conception of freedom is compatible with determinism. A second option for resolving the problem is to reject the idea of freedom entirely, transform our view of human agency, and take a hard determinist position. The original problem disappears if we create a new way to make sense of the world that does not include a concept of freedom. In these two ways we resolve the philosophical problem and make philosophical progress, even though we do not have a final, settled position that can be proven ‘true’. We make philosophical progress by making sense of the world in a different way – either by employing a new conception of freedom or by rejecting the use of the concept completely.

In the next two sections I will elaborate the problem-resolution conception of philosophy, first examining philosophical problems and then philosophical resolutions. In later sections I will make explicit the implications this conception has for philosophical progress, for philosophy and for P4C.

II. Philosophical problems

Philosophical problems cannot be resolved “by appeal to the known methods of obtaining the facts,” but are instead are about how we should conceive of the facts and the methods (Ryan, 1970, 5). Lipman describes them in a different way: “Philosophy attempts to clarify and illuminate unsettled, controversial issues that are so generic that no scientific discipline is equipped to deal with them” (1988, 91). My description is similar: philosophical problems involve inadequate or incongruous conceptions which cannot be resolved by gathering empirical information, nor can they be given final, uncontroversial resolutions, regardless of the methods or approaches used (see Figure 5, which will be explained and elaborated throughout this section). Under this conception, philosophical problems are different from empirical problems, although equally authentic.22

[ALL PROBLEMS Diagram]

Figure 5: Simple diagram of the relationship between philosophical and other kinds of problems

22 This should be distinguished from the conception of the logical positivists where empirical problems are the only real problems, and so-called philosophical problems are merely conceptual confusions.
Conceptions that fail

Philosophical problems arise when we conceptualise the world and find that these conceptions fail in various ways. They occur because our conceptions objectively do not ‘make sense’ or ‘hang together’, not because we lack information, nor because we have a subjective feeling of doubt.\textsuperscript{23} The traditional problems of philosophy, such as mind and body, scepticism, the problem of evil, or applied ethics issues such as abortion or war, can be understood in this way. For example, Blackburn describes the problem of free-will as an incompatibility between two equally compelling aspects of our conceptions:

We live our day-to-day lives doling out responsibility and praise and blame, without worrying too much about excuses. We believe ourselves to be happily in control, sometimes. But then something gives us pause. We find we can’t quite keep together our picture – there seems to be bits missing, or bits that don’t fit. We cannot keep together our conception of ourselves as free agents, motivated by thoughts and reasons, with an alternative but equally powerful conception of ourselves as creatures of nature, part of the everyday causal flux. We need to restore harmony, and this is where the philosophy becomes hard (2006, 109-110).

Because they are problems with how we conceptualise, philosophical problems remain after we have all the possible information or empirical knowledge. For example, even if I know everything about the history of different societies and have accurate information about different systems of social organisation, the philosophical problem of what counts as a fair society will still remain. However, philosophical problems should be distinguished from empirical problems which cannot be resolved because the empirical information needed is currently unavailable. In principle, these empirical problems could be resolved if empirical information were available, unlike philosophical problems which cannot be resolved empirically no matter how much empirical information is available.

Some ethical issues about what should be done and how we should be also count as philosophical problems because they are the result of problematic conceptions. These problems only arise because our conception of how we should act and be does not provide clear or coherent directions. For example:

- The problem of whether we should eat meat occurs because our conceptions of animal rights and the value of animal life are ambiguous about whether we are required to be vegetarian, or whether it is sometimes permissible to eat meat.
- The problem of whether to take bribes when doing business in a foreign country occurs because of a clash between incompatible conceptions of how to conduct business and because we lack an overarching conception that provides clear guidance about whether it is justifiable to ‘do as the Romans do’.\textsuperscript{24}

There seem to be two different but related types of philosophical problems: they can involve an incongruence or inadequacy of our conceptions.

**Incongruence**

Philosophical incongruence includes philosophical dilemmas and inconsistencies, and the most extreme versions are paradox, contradiction or incoherence. Rescher calls these philosophical problems “aporetic clusters” which are “a group of contentions that are individually plausible but collectively inconsistent” (2006, 17). There are at least four related sources of philosophical incongruence:

\textsuperscript{23} I argue that philosophical problems are essentially problematic conceptions, but not always exclusively, as they may also involve non-conceptual elements. Some involve an experience of doubt and discomfort (Burbules, 2000, 173). Others, especially of an ethical nature, involve emotional dissonance. For example, the philosophical problem of vegetarianism may involve disgust about the treatment of animals raised for food.

\textsuperscript{24} There are also other sorts of problems associated with problematic ethical conceptions that are not philosophical problems. For example, the problem of how to overcome our weakness of will about taking bribes or about eating meat when we are convinced by the arguments against bribery or for vegetarianism.
1) Some incongruities arise because there are multiple conceptions of an issue that are each seemingly legitimate but inconsistent with each other. For example:
   - Biology may present one conception of ‘human nature’, psychology another and religion a third.
   - The law has one conception of ‘responsibility’ and psychiatry another.
2) Other incongruities arise from a clash between our conceptions and our experiences. For example:
   - We normally think that being free is good, but we sometimes feel happier being told what to do. Alternatively we might think that ‘happiness’ is doing what we want, but then find that we are unhappy when we follow our whims for too long.
   - We may develop a theory about friendship or love, but then find our experiences present counter-examples to our theory.
3) We can also have incongruous implications of our conceptions. For example:
   - We think that freedom should be preserved, but understood as a categorical imperative, this leads to problematic implications. Do we allow people to smoke in public, thus taking away the freedom of others to a smoke-free environment, or do we prevent smoking in public thus taking away the freedom of smokers? We seem required to do one or the other, but the implications of either are incongruous with our conception that freedom should be universally preserved.
   - Our theories may imply counter-intuitive implications which we are reluctant to accept.
   - Our theory of ethics may require us to perform actions that we think are unfair or unjust.
4) A final source of incongruence is when our personal conceptions do not logically cohere. We can believe two or more things that both seem correct but which cannot be correct together. For example:
   - We might believe that we are free agents able to make free choices, but we also believe that everything that happens is causally determined.
   - We might value honesty, but we also think that our children should tell their grandparents they liked their Christmas presents, even when they hated them.
   - We might have a pro-life world-view, including being vegetarian and pacifist, yet we also believe that abortion is permissible.

Inadequacy

A second type of philosophical problem is when our conceptions are imprecise, incomplete or inadequate. Russell’s interpretation is that such philosophical problems occur when our beliefs and assumptions do not provide conceptual unity and “system” (1998, 90). We resolve these sorts of problem by bringing order, precision, illumination and completeness to our conceptions. There are at least five related sources of philosophical inadequacy:

1) One type of inadequacy is when we lack a full or comprehensive conception of an issue or practice. This is the focus of much of the ‘philosophy of …’ approach. For example, we have a philosophical inadequacy if:
   - Our view of childhood does not clearly explain the differences between a child and an adult.
   - Our view of art cannot tell us whether the rocks stacked by tourists at the base of Aoraki/Mt. Cook count as art or not.
2) A second source of inadequacy is related to practical conceptions about how we should live and what we should do. This is the sort of philosophical problem that Dewey (1920) and Rorty (1999) argue philosophy should concentrate on. For example:
   - We may find ourselves doing things we regret because we do not have a conception of what sort of person we should be to give integrity to our actions.
   - We might lack a clear conception of how we should act when faced with the issues of eating veal or assisting a terminally-ill loved one to end their life.
• We might be confronted with widespread social inequality but none of our repertoire of possible conceptions shows us how to alleviate this situation.

3) Another source of philosophical inadequacy arises when we find no justification for our basic beliefs or when we do not understand what Paul calls “the most basic what and why of things” (1994, 409). This is the source of philosophical problems according to the Beardsleys (1965) and the basis for the conception of philosophy as the discipline for finding what it is reasonable to do and believe. For example:
• We might hold that human life is intrinsically valuable, yet have no satisfactory justification.

4) A fourth source of inadequacy is if our conceptions have unjustifiable implications, such as when they lead to injustice (Marx), or exemplify the status quo, dogma and ideology (Foucault and Derrida). For example:
• We may find ourselves with a conception of sovereignty that privileges white interests above those of indigenous people.
• Our conception of knowledge may be conservative and be implicated in right-wing economic theories while unjustifiably excluding communal theories of intellectual property.

5) The final type of philosophical inadequacy occurs when our lives do not make sense to us. Although all philosophical inadequacy involves conceptions that do not make sense, this is the broadest type, involving personal, existential, and ‘meaning of life’ problems such as those examined by Sartre (1957). They are the focus of the therapeutic approach to philosophy as “an activity that provides consolation in the face of the world’s woes” (Brennifer, 2007, 157) which stems from Boethius. For example:
• We might find that the traditional values, beliefs and ways of life no longer give sense and direction to our lives.
• I might work as a lecturer and when asked to define myself I say “I am an academic”, but the problem remains of who I really am.

UnSettleable
The second main feature of philosophical problems, besides being incongruous or inadequate conceptions, is that they are unSettleable (with a capital ‘S’). They cannot be given an uncontroversial, unique resolution in principle, no matter what method or approach is used. A problem that is Settleable, such as the simpler problems of mathematics and science, can be given a unique, final resolution by application of a method that is uncontroversially the best and only way to resolve such problems. We can Settle whether 12 + 12 = 24 by application of mathematical methods, and Settle whether a bowling ball will fall faster than a feather by application of scientific approaches and experimental methods.

Like Collingwood (2005) and Rescher (1978, 2006), I argue that the unSettleability of philosophical problems is a necessary feature of philosophy.25 Philosophical problems are not Settleable because either: i) the methods and approaches that can Settle other types of problems (such as surveys, experiments and calculation) do not apply to philosophical problems; or ii) if they do apply, they provide useful input, but leave room for legitimate argument; or iii) the legitimate application of philosophical approaches and methods (such as counterfactual reasoning, logical analysis, thought-experiments, inference, distinction-making and argumentation) leads to multiple defensible and potentially contrary philosophical resolutions; or iv) when a philosophical approach can be taken that yields a unique result (such as perhaps applying the categorical imperative or the utilitarian calculus to an ethical problem), this does not Settle the philosophical issue, because this is only one possible method or approach in competition with other equally defensible methods and approaches that yield different results.

25 This is also an extension of the view that “as soon as definite knowledge concerning any subject becomes possible, this subject ceases to be called philosophy, and becomes a separate science” (Russell, 1998, 90).
The classification of philosophical problems is not clear-cut

For the purpose of this chapter I have concentrated on the clear, central cases of philosophical problems. Yet the distinction between philosophical and other problems is not clear-cut and there are fuzzy edges, borderline cases and ambiguities. I summarise some of these cases in Figure 6, and then explain in more detail.

Figure 6: Elaborated diagram of the relationship between philosophical and other kinds of problems

Key:  
P – The problems addressed in applied or practical philosophy  
T - Theoretical problems involving unSettleable incongruence and inadequacy in our conceptions  
S - Simple problems in our conceptions with a straight-forward method of Settlement eg mathematics  
L - Logic problems with a straight-forward method of Settlement  
A – Problems that are Settled by a straight-forward application of a particular philosophical theory  
D – Philosophical problems addressed in other disciplines  
O – Ordinary empirical disciplinary problems that are addressed and Settled within a discipline

1) It is sometimes difficult to decide whether a problem is philosophical because the question used to identify the problem is ambiguous. For example, the question ‘What is the mind?’ could be used to identify philosophical problems about what ‘mind’ means. Alternatively, it could point to an empirical problem about whether the brain or the wider nervous system is fully responsible for all mental activity.

2) It is also difficult to pin down philosophical problems because every discipline addresses several kinds of problem.

Philosophy sometimes addresses problems which are not philosophical in order to resolve philosophical problems. For instance, in applied ethics, before we can resolve the philosophical problem of whether euthanasia is permissible in a particular case, we must first resolve the medical problem about the patient’s prognosis. A second example is simple problems of logic which can be given uncontroversial answers using established methods such as propositional logic. Because they can be given Settled answers they are not philosophical problems as such and are more like mathematical problems.

Figure 6 depicts a sophisticated conception of philosophical problems, but it also leaves some ambiguity which I will not attempt to disambiguate because this would take me beyond the scope of my interest in philosophical progress. For example, I leave it an open question whether there might be: An overlap between empirical and conceptual problems; problems that can be Settled but which are not empirical and cannot be Settled using the established methods of any discipline; unSettleable problems with our conceptions which are different from philosophical problems; and, empirical problems which cannot be Settled, even in principle.
further example might be problems that require the uncritical application of a philosophical theory. For instance, the problem of whether Kantianism allows me to pretend to be sick so I can miss work would not count as a philosophical problem if it can be settled by applying the categorical imperative (as it can under some readings of the categorical imperative). This is different from the philosophical problems of whether Kantianism is an adequate method to resolve ethical issues or whether it is ethically permissible to pretend to be sick to miss work.

Conversely, philosophical problems are not limited to philosophy. Other disciplines sometimes address philosophical problems, such as whether history is fiction or whether atoms are real. Even though historians grapple with the status of their discipline and physicists investigate the ontological nature of their theories, when they do so they are not using the methods of history or physics on empirical problems, but are seeking philosophical resolutions to philosophical problems.

3) There may also be borderline philosophical problems. Examples might be the complex, theoretical problems of disciplines such as physics and mathematics. Although simple problems in these fields may be given settled resolutions using established procedures, the most complicated, cutting-edge problems seem to involve inadequacy and incongruity in our conceptions that goes beyond what these procedures can settle. For instance, whether light is a wave or a particle might be such a problem.

III. Philosophical Resolutions

We resolve philosophical problems by moving to new conceptions that are congruous and adequate where the problematic conceptions were incongruous and inadequate. The problem is resolved but not settled because other alternatives or refinements are possible. Kekes (1980, 115) puts this in a different but insightful way. A resolution:

- is an interpretation which provides a possible way of thinking about a segment of reality.
- Interpretations can be thought of as issuing a conditional: if you think of reality in this way and act accordingly, then what was previously problematic will no longer be so.

Resolution of a philosophical problem is similar to what is commonly called taking a philosophical ‘position’, however a richer picture is what Goodman calls “world-making” (1978, 101). We resolve philosophical problems by making a world anew: composing a new conception or ordering, supplementing, deleting, dividing, emphasising or weighting different aspects of a conception.

‘Philosophical resolution’ has a different sense from ‘true position’ (though it may often have a similar referent). A ‘true position’ is timeless, unique, and final, but resolutions are situated, plural and changeable. Resolution is better understood in terms of Goodman and Elgin’s reconception of ‘truth’ as ‘rightness’ (1988, §X2), where ‘right’ is understood as being a ‘good fit’ with the world and our other conceptions, rather than being the single accurate copy of ‘reality’. In particular, a philosophical resolution is a transformation of our conceptions that is ‘right’ where the incongruous and inadequate problem was ‘wrong’.

Resolved and settled but plural and not final

Resolution occurs when we reconceptualise so that our original problem no longer occurs. This should be distinguished from reaching an ideal, final, or unique endpoint. When we have resolved a problem, it is still possible to get, for example, more discernment or insight, or, as I argue later, a conception that is in greater reflective equilibrium with our total set of rational considerations. Also, there will always be a plurality of defensible resolutions to philosophical problems, because, to take a lesson from Quine’s holism, there will always be multiple ways to reconceptualise problematic conceptions so they are congruent and adequate.

Despite resolution not being a unique or final end-point, it can be described as a ‘settlement’ of a problem in the sense that Dewey uses this term, meaning a warranted closure to a competent inquiry, rather than Settlement with a capital ‘S’ as I described it earlier.
The “settlement” of a particular situation by a particular inquiry is no guarantee that *that* settled conclusion will always remain settled. The attainment of settled beliefs is a progressive matter; there is no belief so settled as not to be exposed to further inquiry… the criterion of what is taken to be settled, or to be knowledge, is being *so* settled that it is available as a resource in further inquiry; not being settled in such a way as not to be subject to revision in further inquiry (1938, ch1).

A philosophical resolution is a settlement of a problem in the Deweyan sense of a fallible, revisable conclusion we are warranted to use for further inquiry.

Philosophical resolution is not a final state where all doubts are dispelled, all questions answered or all lines of inquiry exhausted, because every resolution contains the germ of new progress. Every philosophical resolution not only dissolves the original problem, but it also raises new, more sophisticated problems, thus pointing to further progress. This is well-expressed by Lipman’s metaphor:

> Philosophy … is not looking for terminal answers… Like a terminal illness, a terminal answer gives you no options… A good answer is instead like a candle in the dark. It provides both light and mystery. It should, of course, illuminate, while at the same time reveal the contours of the unknown so that the listener can surmise that there is much more to be investigated and learned (Lipman, et al., 1980, 203).

Rescher proposes a fundamental law of philosophical development on this basis: “Any given philosophical position, at any particular stage in its development will, if developed further, encounter inconsistencies” (2006, 81). It is impossible to “dispel all the problems, answer all the questions [or] resolve all the difficulties. Inconsistency keeps breaking in on us” (2006, 76).

**Transformed conception**

We resolve philosophical problems by transforming our current conceptions so the problems no longer occur. This involves a gestalt shift where suddenly the problematic situation is experienced as adequate and congruent. For example, consider the philosophical incongruity between praising honesty while requiring our children to say they liked the presents they hated. If we transform our conception of honesty to ‘telling the truth as long as it is not offensive’, it is possible to, without contradiction, hold honesty as an important value and also believe that children should tell their grandparents that they liked their inappropriate presents. We have not gained ‘truth’ or a Settled position immune to further improvement, but the original incongruity no longer occurs in this transformed conception.

Although philosophical resolution involves a transformation of our conceptions, this need not be radical, nor involve an incommensurable discontinuity between the previous conception and the transformed resolution. Sometimes we resolve a problem by fixing a small ‘crack’ in the conception, such as replacing an overstated proposition with one that is more modest. Even such a minimal change can transform the whole conception so it now works, ‘hold water’ or as I argue later, allows us to ‘stay afloat’. For example, replacing ‘tradition’ with ‘culture’ or ‘cause’ with ‘justification’ are minor changes that nevertheless transform our ways of conceiving so we can resolve problems in social philosophy and epistemology. Alternatively, we might resolve a problem in a more fundamental way, through a paradigm shift. For example, Kant’s development of the conception of the ‘thing-in-itself’ radically transformed our conception of the world and resolved a number of philosophical problems.

Because we transform our conceptions when we resolve a philosophical problem, what we conceive, experience and discern is also transformed, and thus we can think and do things which were previously unavailable. For example, if we resolve the problem of free-will by taking a compatibilist position, we conceive of and experience freedom in a new way, and we can be more discerning and consistent in our...
judgements and actions related to freedom and responsibility. This feature of philosophical resolutions is consistent with Habermas’ (1972) interpretation of philosophy as an emancipatory discipline that breaks us out of restrictive conceptions. Philosophical resolutions not only transform our conceptual understanding, they also liberate us by allowing us to discern new things and take new actions.

Following from this, when we resolve a philosophical problem and transform our conceptions, who we are is likewise transformed (even if it is not a radical transformation). We are moved by different reasons, have different commitments, think new things, have new norms and ideals to live by, and see ourselves, the world, and the interrelationships, differently.

Objective

Philosophical problems arise when our conceptions are incongruous with, or inadequate to account for, some of our rational considerations such as our experience, settled or warranted knowledge, defensible conceptions, or standards of logic and reasoning. We resolve these problem by adapting our conceptions so they are congruous with, and adequate to account for, these rational considerations.

This means that resolving a philosophical problem is not a kind of radical relativism, constructivism or subjectivism, nor is it merely making our personal conceptions internally coherent. A resolution is more objective than what Kant, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, refers to as a subjective “self-contained game” because they must be judged against what Dewey calls “extra-ideal, extra-mental things” which are independent of our subjective preferences (1977, 3). If a conception is not adequate to account for, or congruous with, such external considerations as logic, experience and the most warranted, settled knowledge we currently have, it fails to count as a resolution (irrespective of whether I believe it is resolved, or whether it is personally expedient, enables me to psychologically cope or is subjectively satisfying). Putting it colloquially, the extra-mental considerations provide objective checks and balances, keep our resolutions honest or give them the seal of approval.

Yet despite being objective, resolving a philosophical problem does not involve making totally neutral, impartial, judgements about which conceptions correspond with or copy the world. This impossibly strong standard of objectivity is rejected in favour of an objectivity that is “accessible enough to be realistically aspired to, yet objective enough to be worthy of the name” (Haack, 1993, 351-357).

The relationship between the world and the conceptions that form our resolutions is best seen as adaptation or accommodation. A philosophical problem occurs when our conceptions are mal-adapted to the extra-mental rational considerations and we resolve it by adjusting or adapting our conceptions to these considerations. Our resolutions account for, accommodate, or fit with the extra-mental rational considerations, and they are answerable to or satisfy their demands without being determined by them. We resolve philosophical problems by connecting, organising, and interweaving the most reliable intersubjective knowledge in order to make our conceptions viable or liveable.

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28 There are numerous arguments for why this level of objectivity is always impossible: It is not possible to have immediate, direct, non-inferential, perception of reality (Sellars, 1963); humans cannot take an unbiased, completely objective “view from nowhere” (Nagel, 1986); and our conceptions are always limited by, or relative to, our personal and historical paradigms (Kuhn, 1962), perspectives (Nietzsche, 1968), language games (Wittgenstein, 1991), or horizons (Gadamer, 1975).

29 This accessible-objective position provides what Habermas (1984) calls a “superior vantage point” rather than the impossible view from nowhere. There have been various names for this sort of objectivity: “strong objectivity” (Harding, 1993, 69-71), “weak relativism” (Slade, 1997), “subjective-objective” (Bleazebry, in press) and “mitigated relativism” (Code, 1991, 320).

30 Other similar accounts of the relationship between our conceptions and the world illuminate how we can have objective warrant for our conceptions without them having to copy the world: The world resists or objects to our conceptualisation (Latour, 2000), and we self-correct (Peirce) or reconstruct (Dewey) our conceptions in response to the world. Alternatively, our conceptions are falsifiable by the world (Popper, 1963), are the best explanation of the way the world is (Harman, 1965, 1986), enable us to cope with the world (Rorty, 1998), or they must be submitted to the tribunal of observation (Quine & Ullian, 1970).
A resolution must objectively resolve the initial problem. However, to use the language of epistemology, this external condition is not sufficient for a conception to count as a resolution, and an internal condition must also be satisfied. The conception not only has to remove the problem, but we also have to be aware of how and why it removes this problem. The implication of this internalist condition is that an assertion of a congruous and adequate conception does not count as a resolution if it is dogmatically asserted with no awareness of how it resolves a philosophical problem. Even if the externalist conditions are met and the original problem no longer occurs in this improved conception, if the person holding this conception is not aware of the nuances of the problem and the ways that their conception removes this problem, then they have not resolved it.

**In greater reflective equilibrium and justified**

A philosophical problem is a conception that is out of equilibrium, and a philosophical resolution is a reconception that removes the problem and so is back in equilibrium again.\(^{31}\) We resolve problems by moving to conceptions that are in greater reflective equilibrium than the problematic conception, rather than by reaching ideal, final reflective equilibrium, which would be as impossible to reach as Truth.

More specifically, a resolution is in greater wide, intersubjective, critical reflective equilibrium. A resolution is more congruous with, and adequate to account for, the wide range of extra-mental rational considerations, rather than just being more consistent with our personal intuitions or beliefs. A resolution is in greater reflective equilibrium with inter-subjective defensible perspectives, rather than just being a subjective matter. It is more inclusive of defensible perspectives, and hence less biased and partial, and is either tempered directly in the forge of social criticism or supported by and tested against intersubjectively settled methods and standards which have themselves been tempered in the forge of social criticism. A resolution is also the result of critically evaluating, rejecting and self-correcting some elements of our conceptions, or some of our rational considerations, rather than merely making coherent the existing elements of our conceptions and our current settled knowledge and standards.

Reflective equilibrium provides a holistic justification for philosophical resolutions. A resolution is justified when “its components are reasonable in light of one another, and the account they comprise is reasonable in light of our antecedent convictions about the subject at hand” (Elgin, 1996, ix). The justification for a resolution therefore comes from bringing the whole conception into a mutually supporting equilibrium. This view of justification is better thought of as the integrity of our conceptions rather than their foundation. Like the hull of a ship, the various elements of our conceptions keep the structural integrity of the whole so that it remains afloat. The warrant for a philosophical resolution is therefore that it is in integrity with the majority of our fallible, rational considerations, not because it is supported by a few infallible foundations. In fact, because it is impossible to have infallible foundations for our conceptions, the best possible justification that can be provided is by bringing all reasonable knowledge, methods, standards, judgements and other extra-mental rational considerations into mutually supporting reflective equilibrium (Daniels, 1979, 278; Neilson, 1995, 235).

A resolution is justified because it is congruous with, and adequate to account for, a greater number of our rational considerations than the problematic conception it resolves. A resolution is warranted (as a resolution of this problem), even though it may later become the source of a new philosophical problem.

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\(^{31}\) Although reflective equilibrium was famously employed by Rawls (1971), it is also explicitly used in the P4C literature (Lipman, 2003, 103, 171 & 197), and can be traced back to William James: “The individual has a stock of old opinions already, but he meets a new experience that puts them to a strain. Somebody contradicts them; or in a reflective moment he discovers that they contradict each other; or he hears of facts with which they are incompatible; or desires arise in him which they cease to satisfy. The result is an inward trouble to which his mind till then had become a stranger, and from which he seeks to escape by modifying his previous mass of opinions. He saves as much of it as he can, for in this matter of belief we are all extreme conservatives. So he tries to change first this opinion, and then that (for they resist change very variously), until at last some new idea comes up which he can graft upon the stock with a minimum of disturbance of the latter, some idea that mediates between the stock and the new experience and runs them into one another most felicitously and expediently” (1912, 59-60).
when we discover that it is incongruous with, or inadequate to account for, some of our other rational considerations. To distinguish this kind of justification from that of the (impossible) certain proof, Dewey calls it being “warranted” (1938), Rescher calls it being “worthy of acceptance” (2006, 13), and Putnam, “rationally acceptable” (1981).

A philosophical resolution can be epistemically warranted even if there are multiple warranted resolutions. For a philosophical resolution to be warranted we do not have to prove the resolution true or rule out all other possibilities as false. The rational considerations we appeal to when resolving a problem keep us from going astray and justify our resolution, even though they do not determine one final Settled resolution. We can be warranted to assert a philosophical resolution even though we know there are other legitimate alternatives, when the resolution is in equilibrium with, and thus justified by, the majority of our rational considerations, and is more in equilibrium with and more justified than the problematic conception.

Reflective equilibrium also provides a naturalised approach to the justification of our resolutions. Justification starts with the rational considerations that we find ourselves with, such as the current standards of reason and knowledge. These considerations have ‘stood the test of time’, have reliably enabled us to resolve problems, and have provided integrity to our conceptions without being cast into doubt. They therefore count as settled or defensible (in the Deweyan sense), and so, even though they are not immune to revision should they prove problematic in the future, we are warranted in accepting and using them to bring integrity to our resolutions.

The metaphor of Neurath’s boat (1959), to which I have already alluded, is useful for summarising the justification of philosophical resolutions. We start with an already floating ‘boat’ of conceptions which have allowed us to resolve the problems we have encountered in the past. If any elements of these conceptions prove problematic, in other words if the boat springs a leak, it will need to be overhauled. But, because we cannot distance ourselves from our conceptions to revise them, we can only overhaul the boat of our conceptions while we are sailing in them. Nevertheless, the hull of our conceptions provides a secure place to stand, with structural integrity, while we correct the problematic elements. We thus transform our boat from a sinking to a floating vessel. A more radical transformation might even involve giving it an entirely new and different keel.

Summary of philosophical resolutions

A philosophical resolution is different from the resolution of an empirical problem and different from finding Settled truth. When we resolve a philosophical problem there are always alternative defensible resolutions and we will always face new or more sophisticated problems. Philosophical resolution is also transformative rather than merely additive. We resolve philosophical problems by transforming our conceptions so they now work, where our original problematic conception did not. Our resolutions can have objective warrant when they satisfy externalist and internalist extra-mental condition: It must work to remove the problem within the constraints of logic, the world and intersubjectively settled conceptions, and we have to be aware of how our new conception resolves the problem. Resolving a philosophical problem in this way is best understood as moving to a conception that is in reflective equilibrium where the problematic conception was out of equilibrium. Reflective equilibrium also provides holistic, naturalist justification for resolutions. We maintain the integrity of our resolutions, and thus justify them, by bringing them into greater equilibrium with the settled standards of reasoning, knowledge and inter-subjective critique.

IV. Exemplification of the problem-resolution conception

In this section I show that the problem-resolution conception of philosophy is exemplified by the explicit philosophical method of key, influential philosophers, and by many of the characteristic moves made in philosophy. On this basis I claim that it is a fitting way to conceptualise philosophy, even though I do not attempt to prove that all philosophy takes this problem-resolution form.
Socratic Aporia

The Socratic conception of philosophy presents one illustration of the problem-resolution conception. Socratic philosophy starts with an unreflective view which, through dialectic questioning and answering, is shown to be inadequate and so a philosophical problem. Successive resolutions of the problem are suggested, each of which is shown to be incongruous or inadequate, until we reach a state of aporia where “words slip and slide”, suggested resolutions “always seems to go around in circles” (*Euthyphro*, 11b), and where the mind is forced into a “quandary” (*Republic*, VII, 524e), and we cannot find our way forward. This aporia is the intellectual source of the conception of philosophical problems.

Hegel and dialectical philosophy

The dialectic from Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* also exemplifies a problem-resolution conception of philosophy. Philosophical dialectic starts with a fundamental conception which Hegel calls the thesis. A philosophical problem emerges as the antithesis when the thesis is shown to be inconsistent, to lead to incongruous implications or to be in competition with other equally plausible but contrary conceptions. Resolution occurs when we develop a synthesis that reconciles the thesis and antithesis. Once synthesis is reached, this becomes a new thesis that is contrasted with a new antithesis, and the dialectic begins again at a higher level.

Hegel’s dialectic illustrates one particular type of philosophical problem and resolution, but I argue that there are others. For Hegel, philosophical problems involve two contrary or contradictory conceptions, and they are resolved by forming a new conception that preserves the partial truths in each of them. Yet philosophical problems might sometimes involve completely inadequate conceptions which we resolve by rejecting these conceptions entirely. Also, incongruities such as those between a thesis and antithesis might sometimes be resolved by rejecting one or both conceptions, in favour of a better conception.

Wittgenstein and philosophical therapy

Wittgenstein exemplifies the problem-resolution conception of philosophy by depicting philosophical problems as illnesses and philosophical resolutions as therapies or cures. Philosophical problems for Wittgenstein are diseases that beset thinking (1972b, §6), that involve confusions of language (1991, 1.132), or pseudo-statements (1972a, 71), that exercise a kind of “bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language” (1991, 1.109). Philosophical resolution of these problems causes the “vanishing of the problem” (1961, 6.521) and gives peace from the torment of incongruous questions (1991, 1.133).

Wittgensteinian problems involve an incongruous or inappropriate use of language or confusion in our ‘language games’. For example, ‘What is the mind?’ can be understood as a Wittgensteinian philosophical problem where we take the generally useful question form ‘What is the…?’ and apply it in an inappropriate way to an inappropriate subject. ‘What is the mind?’ treats the mind as a thing when it is not, and thus has us create incongruous conceptions of the relationship between mind and body.

Wittgenstein expresses this view of philosophical problems clearly in *Culture and Value*:

> We keep hearing the remark that philosophy really does not progress, that we are still occupied with the same philosophical problems as were the Greeks. Those who say this however, don’t understand why it has to be so. It is because our language has remained the same and keeps seducing us into asking the same questions. As long as there is still a verb ‘to be’ that looks as though it functions in the same way as ‘to eat’ and ‘to drink’, as long as we still have adjectives ‘identical’, ‘true’, ‘false’, ‘possible’, as long as we continue to talk of a river of time and an expanse of space, etc., etc., people will keep stumbling over the same cryptic difficulties and staring at something that no explanation seems capable of clearing up (1998, 22e).

We resolve Wittgensteinian philosophical problems when we stop asking the ill-formed questions that caused the problems. For example, we cannot resolve the problem indicated by the question ‘What is the mind?’ by creating a new and congruent conception of ‘mind’. Trying to create such a conception is
the source of the problem. Instead, we resolve the problem by realising the question is ungrammatical nonsense like ‘colourless ideas sleep furiously.’ The problem vanishes because we see it as a pseudo-problem and stop addressing it.

Wittgenstein presents one type of philosophical problem and resolution, but, just as I did with Hegel, I argue that there are others. Some philosophical questions may turn out to be illegitimate and we resolve these problems by avoiding the questions. Yet, others involve incongruous conceptions that are best resolved by taking a new perspective rather than just avoiding the question. For example, the philosophical problems that result from inadequate conceptions of how minorities should be treated are best resolved by devising new conceptions of rights or fair treatment, not by ignoring the questions.

**Wittgenstein and finding your way about**

An alternative example of the problem-resolution conception also comes from Wittgenstein, who writes: “A philosophical problem has the form: I do not know my way about” (1991, 1.123). This sort of problem is an inadequacy in our current conceptions which leaves us intellectually lost. We resolve these problems, or as Wittgenstein writes, make them “completely disappear” (1991, 1.133), when we find new ways of navigating, or thinking through the issue. Philosophical resolution for Wittgenstein is thus a new way of seeing, acting and being. Nothing changes when we resolve a philosophical problem, but we now have a map of the intellectual terrain that enables us to live and move about in new ways where the problems no longer affect us.

**Other types of philosophical resolution in the philosophy literature**

The general philosophical literature also employs a number of types of philosophical resolution, each of which, I argue, is an instance of the problem-resolution conception of philosophy. For each type I will show how it has been used to resolve issues in the philosophy of mind.32

**Reductionism:** Reductionism resolves philosophically problematic conceptions by reducing them to, and explaining them in terms of, non-problematic conceptions. For example, the concept of ‘mind’ tends to be both incongruous with much of what we know about the brain and also inadequate to explain mental phenomena such as beliefs and consciousness. Reductionists have attempted to remove these problems by reducing all talk of the mind to talk of brain states, but this approach is widely thought to have failed. However, reductionism has also taken the form of functionalism where propositional attitudes such as beliefs are reduced to multiply realisable functional states. Alternatively, Fodor (1975) has argued that ‘the mind’ reduces to, and should be understood in terms of, ‘a language of thought’ which, he claims, does the work of ‘the mind’ but is less problematic.

**Eliminativism:** An eliminativist resolution works like surgery for cancer – it removes the problematic conception entirely. For example, the Churchlands (1981, 1986) have taken eliminativist positions about the mind and in particular about beliefs. They have argued that because our everyday conceptions about beliefs and minds are nonsensical and nowhere instantiated, we should resolve the philosophical problems involved with these conceptions by eliminating them. In other words, they argue that there is no such thing as the mind or beliefs.

**Instrumentalism:** Philosophical problems can also be resolved instrumentally when we treat a problematic conception as an intellectual ‘overview’ that is a useful, but not an accurate, description. For example, Dennett’s intentional stance (1987) is an example of an instrumentalist approach in the philosophy of mind. He argues that talk of the mind has instrumental value and should not be eliminated, even though it does not, and cannot, describe anything real such as brain states. We treat people as if they have beliefs because, even though it is not a literally correct description of them, it is the most reliable method for predicting and explaining their behaviour.

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32 See Blackburn (2006, ch5) for an alternative list of types of resolution to the philosophical problem of truth.
Quietism or minimalism: Quietism or minimalism resolves philosophical problems by showing that the problem disappears if we cease to theorise about it. The quietist diagnosis of philosophical problems is that our attempts to discover a deep structure or essence have led us to create incongruous conceptions. If we stop theorising, and just use our common-sense conceptions, these incongruities no longer arise. A.J. Ayer (1959) and the logical positivists often advocate a quietist or minimalist path for resolving philosophical problems: Philosophy should clean up the conceptual confusion caused by excess theorising. Quietism or minimalism resolves the problems from philosophy of mind by rejecting complex metaphysical theorising and instead only using ‘mind’ in the way we do in everyday language, without raising deeper philosophical issues about the nature or essence of the ‘mind’.

Coining concepts: Another philosophical move to resolve incongruence and inadequacy is by introducing new concepts. Either our old concepts have got us into trouble and need to be replaced, or we need new concepts to express what was previously inexpressible. Deleuze and Guattari’s view of philosophy as “the art of forming, inventing and fabricating concepts” (1994, 2) makes such conceptual creativity the central feature of philosophy. Applying this to the philosophy of mind, Brentano’s (1874) coining of the concept of ‘intentionality’, or the ‘aboutness’ of our conscious experience, has been used to resolve a number of problems related to our understanding of consciousness.

V. The problem-resolution conception and philosophical progress

My argument in this chapter is that moving from philosophical problem to resolution is a defensible conception of philosophical progress. We make philosophical progress when incongruous and inadequate conceptions are transformed into congruous and adequate conceptions that open up new paths of intellectual navigation. This conception allows us to make sense of philosophical progress despite widespread disagreement and the absence of settled, definitive conclusions. Even though philosophy never reaches final answers, and even though philosophers disagree about whether one conception resolves more of the important problems than another conception (not to mention disagreements because someone mistakenly thinks they have resolved a problem), we can still make epistemic philosophical progress by resolving philosophical problems.

The core of philosophical progress is transforming incongruous and inadequate conceptions so they are back in reflective equilibrium, but this is not the whole story. We make progress through successive iterations of resolving problems, where every resolution becomes the source of a new problem to be resolved. The original problem arises as an incongruous, inadequate conception and we develop a more congruous and adequate conception to resolve this problem. However, more advanced problems arise, which might be previously unnoticed problems, more subtle variations of previous problems, or even new information that shows the resolution to be problematic. In response we might develop yet more congruous and adequate versions of the resolution. Alternatively we might abandon a line of resolution that we judge to be fundamentally in error, or develop radical resolutions that were not previously available. Although we may seem to return to the same sorts of problems and lines of resolution, we are not merely going around in circles or following philosophical fads, but developing more and more sophisticated problems and conceptions (see Figure 7).

33 Coining new concepts is one instance of resolving philosophical problems by making distinctions, in this case by employing new concepts specially designed for this task. See Rescher (2006, ch3) for an analysis of making distinctions as a characteristic philosophical move for resolving problems.

34 I leave it an open question whether: 1) there are perennial philosophical problems which we are obliged to return to again and again in ever more sophisticated ways such as truth, justice and freedom (which is the position that Rescher is inclined towards); or 2) whether the old problems and resolutions are now obsolete, surpassed, and should be forgotten because the conceptions associated with them cause our current incongruities and inadequacies (which is the position that Rorty or Wittgenstein espouse). However, even if the past problems and resolutions are the source of current philosophical problems, each individual may still have to work through these ‘obsolete’ problems and resolutions so they can understand the current state of play in philosophy.
Sometimes, as Rescher argues (1978, 244), progress can occur by the concurrent development of equally defensible but rival schools of thought. One person might develop, for instance, a pragmatist conception, while another develops a virtue ethics conception and a third, a Platonist conception, each of which, on balance, are in equilibrium with our rational considerations to an equivalent extent.

At other times, however, we make progress by rejecting one line of resolution in favour of a better line. One resolution is better than another, first, because it is more problem-complete (which Hintikka, 1962, calls “question-completeness”). The better resolution resolves not only the original problem, but also more of the other currently identified philosophical problems, especially those that resisted resolution.

Second, and more contentiously, one resolution might be better than another if it is more problem-fluent (which Hintikka calls “question-fluency”, and Kuhn (1962) calls “showing future promise”). The better resolution not only resolves the old problems, but also opens up new, unexplored and productive problems which lead to new lines of inquiry and further progress. We make progress by resolving our original problem (and a range of other problems) and by moving to better, more refined, and often tougher problems. As Chalmers quips (1999, xix), we may end up more confused and with more questions and problems, but we are at a higher level than when we started.

Similarly, we make progress as we move to conceptions that are more in wide, intersubjective, reflective equilibrium. The better resolution is the one that is in greater reflective equilibrium with the total set of rational considerations than alternatives. One resolution is worse than another if it is out of equilibrium in more ways, and leads us to reject more of our important settled rational considerations.

To illustrate the process of making philosophical progress, consider the development of materialist and dualist positions about the mind. We might initially make progress by identifying a problem about how mental descriptions, especially about the phenomenological aspects of consciousness, resist materialist explanations. We then make further progress by taking a dualist position which solves this philosophical problem, where current materialist alternatives could not. However, as we discover further problems that arise because of an incompatibility of the dualist position with a scientific conception of the world, we might argue that although we made progress by developing the initial dualist position, we can make more progress by adopting a more sophisticated functionalist-materialist position. This is progress because, in comparison with the dualist alternative, materialism resolves more philosophical problems, not just those about the mind, is congruent with more of our most important, settled rational considerations (especially the scientific conceptions), leads us to reject fewer of these

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**Figure 7:** Diagram of philosophical progress from incongruous, inadequate, problematic conceptions to multiple philosophical resolutions that are more and more congruous and adequate
considerations, and leads to a more fruitful research program addressing new problems in cognitive science and AI. We have not proved materialism true and dualism false, nor have we ruled out more sophisticated dualist positions, but we have made progress first by identifying a problem, then adopting dualism, and then by identifying new problems in this position and adopting a more sophisticated materialist position as a resolution.

**Philosophical tasks, milestones and progress**

Under the problem-resolution conception, the overall means of making philosophical progress, and therefore the core job of philosophy, is to resolve philosophical problems (or put in standard philosophical terms, to defend philosophical positions). However, to reach a resolution we need to first engage in a number of related philosophical tasks such as asking new questions, producing new positions and arguments, extending and clarifying positions and rejecting failed positions. Each of these results in milestones in the overall process of philosophical progress from problem to resolution, and so each is also a means of making progress.\(^{35}\)

We make philosophical progress by arguing for a resolution, or in other words, arguing that a conception resolves an important philosophical problem. We demonstrate that unlike the problematic conception, the resolution is congruent with, and adequate to account for, our rational considerations based on logic, our knowledge of the world and our intersubjectively settled conceptions and standards. If it is not congruent with, or adequate to account for, some of our rational considerations, we can make progress by arguing that these considerations should be rejected or modified, and the resolution kept.

We can also make philosophical progress by arguing against a resolution and trying to show it does not resolve one or more important philosophical problems. We try to show that the suggested resolution is incongruous with some of our important rational considerations and that we should reject the incongruous resolution, not these considerations. We do this by arguing that the suggested resolution does not resolve the problem it was meant to resolve, falls prey to unnoticed and significant problems, or is not in equilibrium with our settled rational considerations to the extent that alternative positions are. This gives us the philosophical equivalent of progress by falsification.

On the other hand, we can make philosophical progress by defending philosophical resolutions against critique and enhancing them so they resolve more problems. We make progress by extending the work of others, refining an old school of thought, and offering an improved theory or position.

Another way to make progress is by uncovering the incongruities and inadequacies in our conceptions so that we understand their problematic import and can then resolve them. We might identify and articulate new problems that arise in philosophical resolutions or in the conceptions employed in other disciplines, or we might discover new knowledge that is incongruous with our old conceptions. Through problematising in these ways, we can make significant philosophical progress even though we have yet to resolve the problems we uncover.

Given we make philosophical progress through a dialectical process, where a problematic conception is surpassed by a more congruous and adequate conception, only to be surpassed by an even more congruous and adequate conception, then another task of philosophy is to point out the old philosophical conceptions that are obsolete and should no longer be adopted.\(^{36}\) We can thus make philosophical progress by identifying and then abandoning obsolete conceptions.

\(^{35}\) I say more about philosophical milestones and their relationship to progress in chapter 6.

\(^{36}\) Rorty says this with characteristic eloquence: “It would be an oversimplification to say that the task of philosophy is to stop people from thinking of things in obsolete terms inherited from great dead philosophers – to persuade them to throw away the indispensable ladders up which our culture has climbed in the past. But this is certainly a large part of their job. If you impose Aristotelian terminology on Galileo, or Cartesian terminology on Darwin, or the terminology of Kantian moral philosophy on debates about abortion, you will be making needless trouble for yourself” (1998, 6).
We make further progress by asking and answering philosophical questions. Each question picks out a philosophical problem, and each answer is an attempted resolution to this problem, as I explain further in chapter 5. We can also make philosophical progress by engaging in the meta-philosophical task of refining and improving philosophical standards and methods.

Even more broadly, we can make philosophical progress by describing how various philosophical problems and resolutions were developed and how they are interrelated. We can: Compare and contrast philosophical resolutions; map the various resolutions offered to particular philosophical problems; analyse how different resolutions hang together; and work out the implications and ramifications of a resolution, as well as what our commitments must be for us to hold a particular resolution (Rapaport, 1982, 296). By doing this, we create an intellectual history or geography of philosophical progress.

Summary of the problem-resolution conception and philosophical progress

The problem-resolution conception of philosophy shows that there can be philosophical progress even though no philosophical position finds general or lasting agreement, and every position is only one of many legitimate options. We make progress primarily by identifying philosophical problems and then transforming our conceptions to resolve these problems. However, we also make progress by 1) discovering new, more refined and sophisticated problems and resolutions, and 2) moving to conceptions which, compared with the alternatives, resolve more of the currently identified philosophical problems, are in greater reflective equilibrium with the total set of our rational considerations, and raise more new but productive problems. Although this will never be simple or straightforward, we can judge philosophical progress by asking: Does our new conception remove the problem involved in the old conception? Does our new conception remove other philosophical problems that alternatives do not? Does our resolution lead to new, unexamined problems, that when addressed, will lead to the development of even more adequate and congruous conceptions? Furthermore, we make philosophical progress as we reach milestones on the path to resolving philosophical problems such as asking questions, devising arguments, and revising resolutions.

VI. Philosophy for Children and philosophical progress

My argument in this chapter has been that moving from a philosophical problem to a philosophical resolution is a plausible conception of philosophical progress. In this section I show how this can be the core of an efficacious conception of philosophical progress for P4C. By understanding philosophical problems and resolutions, and how they are central to philosophical inquiry, P4C teachers are able to organise P4C sessions so their students can effectively understand and make philosophical progress.

The problem-resolution conception encapsulates and elaborates the prototype conception of philosophical progress discussed in chapter 3, and solves the problems inherent in this conception. It gives a specific account of what it means to follow a philosophical inquiry where it leads from a meaningless to a meaningful conception, and how we judge we are on track. We start with an incongruous or inadequate conception and then move to a philosophical resolution of this problem. We know we are on track by referencing the problem we start with and considering whether what is being said moves us towards a resolution of this problem. We know we have followed the inquiry where it leads because the philosophical problem we started with no longer occurs in the new meaningful, and warranted mental framework. The problem-resolution conception also shows how progress need not be limited to moving from one place to another, as is implied by the metaphor of following the inquiry where it leads. Although we can resolve a philosophical problem by intentionally following an inquiry where it leads in a logical sequence, we can also accidentally discover resolutions to problems we were not intending to resolve, and resolve our problems by exploring the intellectual terrain and ‘getting the lie of the land’ rather than moving somewhere new.

The problem-resolution conception also illuminates many of the impediments to philosophical progress that occur in P4C. In the rest of this section I will elaborate these problems (which were illustrated in
chapter 1) and show how the problem-resolution conception can resolve them, thereby giving a clearer picture of how to make philosophical progress in P4C.

The problem-resolution conception shows that P4C students cannot make philosophical progress unless they address philosophical problems. This means one impediment to progress occurs when students do not understand what a philosophical problem is, and so they address issues that interest them, puzzle them or make them wonder, but which are not philosophical problems, such as, ‘Why did the main character act like that?’ or ‘Can that really happen?’ The problem-resolution conception remedies this impediment to progress by providing a clear account of the philosophical problems to be addressed.

P4C students can also fail to make philosophical progress because they completely miss the philosophical problems. They may not notice inadequate or incongruous conceptions because of apathy, lack of reflection or superficiality. At other times, they miss the philosophical problems because these are implicit, assumed or unverbalised. The implication of the problem-resolution conception is that P4C students must be willing to seek out and confront challenging philosophical problems if they are to make philosophical progress. They have to be willing to uncover and face what does not make sense about their own treasured and reassuringly secure views (Lipman, 2004c, 4). Because this sort of problematising is unsettling, time consuming, complex and difficult, Lipman is right to assert that it takes courage to do philosophy (1988, 15).

A related reason why P4C students fail to make philosophical progress is that they only have an abstract and disinterested engagement with a philosophical problem. Students (and sometimes teachers) often grapple with philosophical questions as mere intellectual play without apprehending the problem behind the question. This is the same difficulty that Peirce points to:

Some philosophers have imagined that to start an inquiry it was only necessary to utter a question whether orally or by setting it down upon paper, and have even recommended us to begin our studies with questioning everything! But the mere putting of a proposition into the interrogative form does not stimulate the mind to any struggle after belief. There must be a real and living doubt, and without this, all discussion is idle (1877, §4).

The problem-resolution conception shows that to overcome this impediment and make progress, P4C students need to start with an experience of a philosophical problem. We make philosophical progress by resolving a problematic conception, but if students do not appreciate the issue they address as a problematic conception, then there is nothing for them to resolve and no progress is possible.

Philosophical progress will also be impeded when the conceptions that give rise to the problems being addressed are too sophisticated for some of the students to experience and understand. For example, young children do not understand the conception of determinism that arises from a scientific understanding of the world, or a sophisticated conception of political sovereignty, and thus they cannot understand the academic problems of free-will or political autonomy that arise from these conceptions.

Yet, following Bruner, we could argue that any philosophical problem can be appreciated by any student, at any age, if it is presented appropriately, and so P4C teachers can facilitate philosophical progress by pitching the philosophical problems at the right level of complexity for their students. Even if young students cannot understand the problems that arise from a conception of political sovereignty, they can understand the problems that arise in simpler conceptions, such as ‘being in charge.’

The problem-resolution conception can usefully illuminate this difference between the problems that children and adults can apprehend. The philosophical problems a five-year-old can apprehend are not the same as those an adult can understand, because they have different background conceptions. The younger person’s conceptions tend to be philosophically inadequate as they have not yet formed conceptions of all aspects of their world. An older person might have conceptions that are adequate to account for all aspects of their experience, but they may not have reflected deeply on these and so their conceptions may be philosophically incongruous. For example, a five-year-old’s conception of pets may be philosophically inadequate as it does not clearly distinguish which things count as pets and
which do not, leaving the child unsure whether a guard-dog, a book, or a rock could be a pet. An older person might have formed a clear conception of what counts as a pet, such as a pet is an animal you take care of and love, but their conception is philosophically incongruous because it seems to imply that a little sister might count as a pet. The implication is that philosophical progress in P4C (and perhaps the general process of developing conceptions) occurs in a dialectical process similar to Figure 7. We can better scaffold philosophical progress if we keep in mind that we must start with the conceptions the students possess, then help them to discover what is problematic about these conceptions, and then, through dialogue, develop more sophisticated conceptions, which we can also problematise.

The differences between the philosophical problems that children and adults can apprehend can also explain why some academic philosophers are reluctant to accept that children can do philosophy, and why philosophy is traditionally restricted to upper secondary and tertiary education. The problems addressed in academic philosophy tend to be the most difficult, fundamental, and enduring philosophical problems that arise from our most mature, sophisticated and best conceptions of the world. If doing philosophy required engaging with these problems, then children could not do philosophy because they cannot understand the problems. However, the problem-resolution conception shows that even though children might not be able to do academic philosophy, they can do philosophy by addressing their own conceptions that are philosophically incongruous or inadequate.

Progress can also be impeded if P4C students do not understand how to judge whether one conception is better than another, and are therefore unable to judge whether they have made epistemic progress. The problem-resolution conception resolves this impediment by providing clear, objective criteria for judging philosophical progress: Does the problem no longer occur in the new conception? Does the new conception resolve more of the currently identified problems, and open up more new and fruitful lines of inquiry, than alternative conceptions? In other words, is the new conception in greater reflective equilibrium with our total set of settled rational considerations?

However, a related impediment to progress occurs when students are unable to apply these complex criteria. Even if students are able to judge whether they have resolved their problem, it is difficult to judge which alternative resolution is more in reflective equilibrium, and hence better. Making such judgements is challenging even with expert philosophical discernment, so philosophically novice P4C students will need scaffolding. In fact, because making these judgements requires bringing such a wide variety of considerations into equilibrium, any cognitively limited being may need scaffolding.

I argue that simpler criteria such as those from Box 9 can provide this scaffolding. These criteria roughly approximate reflective equilibrium but are easier to apply, so they can be used as heuristics for judging that one resolution is better than another without having to directly make the expert judgement about which is more in reflective equilibrium. In general, we are more likely to remove inadequacy and incongruity by making our conceptions more accurate, deeper, clearer, ordered, and reasoned. These criteria can also be used to judge that one conception is more likely to resolve a problem than alternatives.

37 This also illuminates progress in the discipline of philosophy, which is measured by the successive resolution of the toughest problems. Over thousands of years philosophy (the discipline) has made progress by resolving many of the simpler philosophical problems that P4C students might grapple with, and it is now making further progress by uncovering, addressing and resolving the newer, toughest problems that arise from the most sophisticated conceptions we have developed.

38 The criteria I offer in Box 9 draw on the “intellectual standards” from Paul (1994, 473) and Paul & Elder (2002, 10), and epistemic criteria from Lipman (2003, 233-234 & 245-247), Rescher (1978,225), and Golding (2005a, 2005b), as well as a Project Zero assessment tool describing six continua for assessing thinking (Tishman & Palmer, 2006, 60-61). Box 9 also draws on other criteria I have already suggested in this chapter: adequacy and congruence, inclusivity, sophistication, refinement, discernment and insight, rightness, fruitfulness, being well-adapted to rational considerations, and the ability to liberate us from restrictive conceptions. The list of criteria from Box 9 would be appropriate for a moderately experienced group of P4C students, but simpler criteria would be needed for less experienced students.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clear and precise</th>
<th>Fuzzy</th>
<th>Ordered</th>
<th>Messy</th>
<th>Reasoned</th>
<th>Unreasonable</th>
<th>Accurate</th>
<th>Inaccurate</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Biased</th>
<th>Broad</th>
<th>Narrow</th>
<th>Deep</th>
<th>Superficial</th>
<th>Fruitful</th>
<th>Barren</th>
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The criteria are matters of degree, so we judge that one conception is better than another when it more satisfies the left criteria, and less satisfies the right. For instance, using these heuristic criteria, we might judge one conception is epistemically better than another because it is clearer and deeper, and thus likely to resolve more problems and likely to be in greater reflective equilibrium.\(^{39}\)

Even though these criteria are generally accepted in philosophy and have been demonstrated to be useful for resolving philosophical problems and achieving reflective equilibrium, there is no universal agreement about them. They are put forward in P4C as the best but fallible criteria we currently have, rather than as uncontroversial criteria that are beyond critique.

Also, because these criteria are heuristics for the main criterion of reflective equilibrium, they overlap to a certain extent, and more importantly, they are prima facie criteria and none will trump all others in all contexts. For example, in some cases the broader, more precise and ordered resolution is better. In other cases, the deeper, less biased, and more fruitful resolution is better, even if it is not as clear or broad as other resolutions. This means the criteria cannot be applied mechanically without judgement.

What counts as satisfying the criteria is also context dependent rather than an absolute standard. The aim of philosophical inquiry in P4C is a resolution that is, for example, clear enough, or sufficiently deep and congruous to resolve the students’ problem (which will be more or less complex depending on their age and sophistication). If students try to be absolutely clear or congruous they get bogged-down and are unable to resolve their problem, and unable to make progress (as I discuss in chapter 6 when I investigate the process of philosophical inquiry).

To illustrate the application of these criteria, imagine students are trying to resolve the philosophical problem of whether finders really are keepers, which is problematic because of the tension between ownership and possession. One possible resolution is: “If you find something it is yours.” The problem disappears under this conception because ownership is equated with possession. However, a second resolution which equally resolves the problem is: “It is not yours because there is a difference between possessing something and owning something. Ownership is stronger than possession, otherwise we could not lend things. You might possess something you find, but this is not enough to show you own it.” By using the criteria for judging that one resolution is better than another, P4C students can judge that they have made philosophical progress by taking the second resolution over the first. According to the criteria, the second resolution is better as it is more elaborated (deeper), and takes into account more rational considerations (broader). Also, because the first resolution implies you can own something by taking it without permission, the second resolution is better because it is more consistent with our other important conceptions (congruous). Even though this conception of ownership would not satisfy an academic philosopher, it is deep, broad and congruous enough for the purpose of resolving the students’ current philosophical problem (though as they discover further problems, they will have to develop deeper, broader or more congruous conceptions to resolve them).

Probably the main, underlying impediment to philosophical progress in P4C is that students (and teachers) do not understand the game of philosophical inquiry, what the rules of play are, and how we score goals.\(^{40}\) Without the help of the problem-resolution conception, P4C students are likely to confuse the game of resolving philosophical problems with other games and so they fail to resolve philosophical problems and fail to make philosophical progress. For example, they might confuse scientific and philosophical progress, and then get frustrated because the issues they discuss in P4C do not seem to lead to Settled, scientific answers. Alternatively, P4C students (and teachers) often take philosophical inquiry to be a game played for its own sake where the aim is to get a dialogue that ‘flows’. From this perspective, P4C becomes like the game of hackey-sack where there are no points to score and the aim is just to keep the hackey-sack moving for as long as possible. But this makes philosophical progress

\(^{39}\) In chapter 8 I will address how P4C students learn to employ these criteria for making and judging philosophical progress. They learn as a result of guided participation in philosophical inquiry.

\(^{40}\) Although I use the metaphor of games, I do not imply that these are frivolous activities.
mysterious: How do we get anywhere if we are discussing just for the sake of it? Finally, students may try to play the game of philosophical inquiry in P4C as if the goal is to get the ‘correct’ answers as quickly as possible (as is the implicit goal in some other classes). But if they play the P4C game in this way they may end up confused and frustrated because ‘correct’ answers are never reached.

The problem-resolution conception removes this impediment by enabling students to understand and play by the rules of the P4C game. The purpose of the game is to uncover and resolve philosophical problems and we keep track of our progress by whether we have scored a goal (and by whether we have achieved milestones on the way to a goal, as I discuss in chapter 6). P4C students can thus make progress by explicitly identifying the problem under discussion, suggesting possible resolutions and then critically analysing whether these suggestions work to resolve the problems, and which of them is the better resolution.

What else is needed for a conception of philosophical progress for P4C?

The problem-resolution conception of philosophy is the core of my conception of philosophical progress for P4C, but in the following chapters I will argue that extra features are also needed, such as:

- A conception of philosophical questions that enables students to explicitly articulate philosophical problems. If students cannot accurately formulate philosophical problems, they cannot make progress resolving them. In chapter 5 I argue for a conception of philosophical questions that is efficacious for articulating and resolving philosophical problems.
- A conception of philosophical inquiry that enables students to navigate the complex, often chaotic, movement from problem to resolution and to judge if they have made progress even when they have not reached a resolution. In chapter 6 I provide a framework of inquiry as a heuristic, propaedeutic and pedagogical tool for making philosophical progress. This framework details the moves students can make which will likely result in them making progress, and also the milestones they might reach along the way.
- A way of diagnosing and curing the common epistemic misconceptions that P4C students (and teachers) have which prevent them from understanding philosophical progress and from engaging in philosophical inquiry. In chapter 7 I argue that P4C students (and teachers) commonly take unsophisticated relativist or absolutist personal epistemic positions. If they take a relativist position they cannot conceive of one conception being better than another as they are all equally good, so they do not understand what it means to resolve a philosophical problem by getting a better conception. If they take an absolutist position, they can only conceive of better resolutions as ‘correct answers’, and so they also cannot understand how resolving a philosophical problem is progress given it does not involve a final Settled, correct answer. To conceive of, and thus make philosophical progress, I argue that P4C students (and teachers) need to take an epistemic position of reasoned evaluationism where they judge conceptions as better or worse depending on how reasonable they are. From this position they can understand what it means to get an epistemically better conception (which they cannot understand from a relativist position), even though none can be said to be true (which they cannot understand from an absolutist position).
- An understanding of how P4C teachers can find a balance between controlling the inquiry so it makes progress and giving students freedom to follow the inquiry where it leads, which is necessary for their learning but which can easily end up with students becoming lost. In chapter 8 I argue that the P4C teacher should act as an expedition-educator, who guides students to make progress in their inquiry as the means for students to learn to make progress for themselves.

Postscript: The back-door is left open for idealistic and pessimistic positions

Having presented the problem-resolution conception of philosophy, the realistic view of philosophical progress that it supports, and its implications for philosophical progress in P4C, I can now return to idealistic and pessimistic positions about philosophical progress.
Initially I rejected the idealistic position that philosophy is the search for truth and the pessimistic position that philosophy produces nothing more than an expression of our subjective temperaments, or of historical and sociological forces. However, given the problem-resolution conception does not allow me to claim that these positions are false, and given these are potentially legitimate, defensible metaphilosophical positions that have been held by respectable philosophers, I now want to open a back-door to allow the possibility of their return.

I still argue that the realistic position taken by the problem-resolution conception of philosophical progress is better than idealistic or pessimistic conceptions. However, from the perspective of the problem-resolution conception, and using the style of reasoning advocated to resolve philosophical problems, we might reach an idealistic or pessimistic conclusion. If an idealistic or pessimistic metaphilosophical position were shown to resolve particular metaphilosophical problems, or to be in greater reflective equilibrium than alternative resolutions, then it would be a defensible position to take. Thus we might have first order-pluralism and the problem-resolution conception of philosophy, but from this position we could also develop second-order philosophical idealistic or pessimistic positions.
5. Philosophical questions

By seeing the nature of the problem or by raising pertinent questions, we have already moved some way toward a resolution. Contrariwise, of course, if we have formulated the problem badly, or asked inappropriate questions, then we have taken a step in the wrong direction, and at least temporarily set back the course of our inquiry (Cam, 2006, 4).

So far I have argued that P4C students make philosophical progress by resolving philosophical problems using philosophical methods of inquiry. In this chapter I focus on the best way to begin. The standard technique in P4C is to begin by asking philosophical questions, yet this is not always an effective way to make progress. Addressing philosophical questions might be necessary for making philosophical progress, but as I argued in chapter 4, it can also be an impediment if students address the words of the questions without addressing the underlying problem. I argue that to support philosophical progress in P4C, students should begin by addressing philosophical problems, and philosophical questions should be reconceptualised as tools for articulating and resolving these philosophical problems. Each question should be understood as pointing out a problem to be resolved, and suggested answers should be understood as suggested resolutions to this problem.

In the first section I examine a number of problematic cases, common in P4C, where progress is impeded at the outset of inquiry because students fail to articulate a philosophical problem they can resolve (I deal with later stages of inquiry in chapter 6). In order to avoid these impediments, in the second section I argue that philosophical questions should be reconceptualised as tools for articulating and resolving philosophical problems. In the third section I argue that if they are to be effective as tools, philosophical questions need a particular kind of form. Section four presents a range of different types of questions, each of which is well-formed for philosophical inquiry. I argue that P4C students can use these as exemplars to assist them to more precisely articulate their philosophical problems. In conclusion, I argue that if P4C adopts this conception of philosophical questions as tools, philosophical problems can be more precisely articulated and more easily resolved, and P4C students will be more effective at making philosophical progress.

I. Articulating philosophical problems as questions

In this section I argue that before we can make progress resolving a philosophical problem, we have to articulate it in a form amenable to philosophical inquiry and potential resolution. However, I also argue that this is not easy, especially for P4C students, and these difficulties are not adequately addressed by the problem-resolution conception or the P4C literature.

To make philosophical progress we must begin by identifying a philosophical problem. With an understanding of the problem-resolution conception from chapter 4, P4C students are able to do this. However, judging that a situation is problematic is one thing, but explicitly isolating it in a form that is amenable to resolution is another. To make philosophical progress we must also articulate the problem as a question, which opens up a path to resolve the problem. As Dewey points out:
It is a familiar and significant saying that a problem well put is half-solved. To find out what the problems are which a problematic situation presents to be inquired into, is to be well along in inquiry. To mis-take the problem involved is to cause subsequent inquiry to be irrelevant or to go astray (1938, 112).

The best way to articulate a philosophical problem is as a philosophical question. They “reveal problems by tracing their form, as Michelangelo in his sculptures was supposed to have revealed the forms embedded within blocks of marble” (Cam, 1997a, 7). They isolate the philosophical incongruities and inadequacies we wish to resolve, and so they turn a philosophical inquiry from “blind groping in the dark” to an inquiry with a clear direction (Dewey, 1938, 112).

It might be objected that, even though it is essential to articulate philosophical problems before we can resolve them, we can do this without using philosophical questions. In fact, in the last chapter, I articulated a number of different philosophical problems as statements about an inadequacy or incongruity. Given that we could go on to resolve these problems, perhaps philosophical questions are merely useful for making philosophical progress but not essential.

My reply is that philosophical questions are needed for addressing and removing philosophical problems (and thus for making philosophical progress) in the same way that surgical instruments are needed for doing surgery. It is possible to do surgery with a pocket-knife, but it is not advisable. In a similar way it is possible to isolate philosophical problems without using philosophical questions, but it will be a fairly messy way to do it. Philosophical questions are better instruments for facilitating and guiding the forward movement needed for philosophical progress because they provide a demand, direction and plan for action, whereas statements neither invite, impel, nor direct movement (Dewey, 1938, Ch9). For example, take the following philosophical problem from chapter 4 that is articulated in statement form: There is an incongruence between valuing honesty and thinking our children should tell their grandparents they liked the presents they received, even though they hated them. This statement picks out a philosophical problem, and we could use this to instigate philosophical inquiry. Yet, in statement form, it does not invite inquiry, pick out a particular facet of the problematic conception to investigate, or give clear directions to follow, unlike: ‘Is it always dishonest to lie?’ or ‘Does telling a falsehood to avoid hurting someone’s feelings count as a lie?’

Potential impediments to progress when articulating philosophical problems

To make philosophical progress we must ask questions that articulate philosophical problems and set a clear agenda for resolving them, but this is not easy to do. Pinpointing exactly what is incongruent or inadequate in our conceptions is never clear-cut and always “requires a great deal of experimentation and ingenuity” (Hildebrand, 1999, 382-382). P4C students, in particular, often face difficulties and so are often impeded from making philosophical progress. I will discuss six related difficult cases which occur because the conception of philosophical questions in P4C is problematic (not just because students are learning to ask effective philosophical questions).

1) Unarticulated problem: It is common in P4C (and in philosophy more widely) to experience a philosophical problem but not be able to put it into words. Progress is blocked when students cannot formulate a question which articulates their problem.

2) Not a philosophical problem: P4C students also frequently ask and address questions that fail to articulate any philosophical problem. For example, they might notice that philosophical problems are raised by the case of the boy who could not go outside, but did not want to anyway. But rather than

41 This does not mean that inquiry in P4C must always start with a problem. Addressing a well-phrased philosophical question asked by the teacher can help students to appreciate the force of a philosophical problem they had not contemplated. In this way, a question could initiate philosophical progress. Regardless of which is first and which is second, in order to make philosophical progress, it is necessary to begin inquiry with both the experience of a problem and a question that clearly identifies this problem and directs attempts to resolve it.
asking questions that articulate the philosophical problem, they might ask such questions as ‘Why did the boy not want to go outside?’ or ‘What made him sick?’ which are not conducive for philosophical inquiry, or for making philosophical progress.

3) Poorly articulated philosophical problem: Even if they ask a question that articulates a philosophical problem, student questions are often poorly formed, clumsy and ambiguous, such as ‘Is it better to be able to go outside or better to stay inside?’ These questions do not provide a clear path to follow to resolve a problem and when asked, the result is that students get bogged down in dead-ends and multiple, conflicting, and often irrelevant, lines of inquiry.

4) Conflating several problems: As well as asking poorly formed questions, P4C students often conflate several different problems into one question. The wording of the question then misleads them into thinking there is only one problem and one line of inquiry when there are several, and so their subsequent inquiry will be confused and make little or no progress.

5) Empty questions: A further difficulty is when P4C students ask and address questions which do not articulate their philosophical problem. These are empty questions or mere words for students, and as discussed in chapter 4, the resulting ‘inquiry’ will be merely intellectual play with no prospects of making philosophical progress because there is no problem to resolve. This difficulty is exacerbated when the P4C teacher also asks questions which are, for their students, empty. The P4C teacher-support literature offers lists of philosophical questions, which teachers are to ask to support philosophical inquiry. But there is no guidance about how to choose questions that get to the heart of the problem that their students are grappling with, nor about how to help students to experience the problem underlying the questions. So P4C students are often confronted by empty questions, which offer no path for making philosophical progress.

6) Questions not used for a philosophical function: A similar difficulty is if students ask a question with the intention of addressing a non-philosophical problem, or they use non-philosophical methods to answer this question. For example, students might ask a question such as ‘What is justice?’ which looks philosophical, but their progress can be impeded because they intend to discover the ‘correct’ usage of ‘justice’ according to some authority such as the dictionary or the law. Alternatively, they could want to resolve the philosophical problem of justice but use inappropriate empirical methods such as doing a survey. In either case they approach and use the question in ways that prevent them from resolving a philosophical problem and from making philosophical progress.

These six difficult cases arise, I argue, because each case fails to satisfy at least one of three conditions which are necessary for articulating philosophical problems as questions that will be efficacious for making philosophical progress. For a question to be useful for articulating a philosophical problem and setting an agenda for making philosophical progress, it has to have a philosophical:

1. Purpose/goal: The question has to be asked and addressed for the purpose of resolving a philosophical problem

   Use/method: Philosophical methods of inquiry have to be used to address the question

   Form/wording: The question has to be worded in a way that makes it efficacious for using philosophical methods to resolve the philosophical problem

In the difficult cases 1–4, students have a philosophical goal for their question, but not a philosophical form (and in the case of 1, they have no form at all). In cases 5 and 6, students have a philosophical form for their question, but in case 6 they either have an inappropriate goal for their question or they use it inappropriately for making philosophical progress, while in case 5 they have no philosophical goal for their question at all. Thus P4C students are impeded from making philosophical progress in each of the difficult cases because they either ask questions with a form, use or goal that is inappropriate for making philosophical progress.
II. Reconceptualising philosophical questions as tools

To resolve the difficulties I identified for P4C, in this section I argue that philosophical questions should be reconceptualised as tools for articulating and resolving philosophical problems. My argument is that this conception more easily enables P4C students and teachers to ask and address questions that have a goal, use and form that is efficacious for making philosophical progress, and thus more easily enables them to make philosophical progress.

A common conception in P4C is that there is such a thing as a ‘philosophical question’ and these questions have distinctive characteristics. For example, from Splitter and Sharp:

It is one mark of a philosophical question that its ‘answers’ are essentially contestable and problematic: not only is there no consensus as to what constitutes a satisfactory answer, there is no consensus as to what constitutes a satisfactory method for even beginning to answer the question. Philosophical questions stimulate the kind of thinking which both increases our understanding and leads us to ask further questions (1995, 95).

However, this conception of philosophical questions is inadequate for supporting philosophical progress in P4C because it is silent about both the philosophical purpose for asking these questions, and the philosophical method of approaching them if they are to be efficacious for making philosophical progress. If this conception is employed, P4C students might ask questions with a philosophical form, but their progress is liable to be impeded by difficult cases 5 and 6 as they ask and address empty questions, questions with non-philosophical goals, or they use non-philosophical methods to resolve their questions. In order to support and encourage P4C students to ask questions that are efficacious for making philosophical progress, P4C needs an expanded conception of philosophical questions.

I argue that the best conception of philosophical questions is as tools for identifying and resolving philosophical problems because this conception makes plain the essential conditions for a question to be efficacious for making philosophical progress and allows students to avoid the difficult cases above. By conceiving of philosophical questions as tools for resolving philosophical problems, P4C students understand what the questions are for, that they can be used appropriately or inappropriately for this job, and that they can be well-formed or poorly formed for this job. They also realise that their progress will be impeded if they do not address a philosophical problem, or do not use their question for philosophical inquiry, or if their question is poorly formed for philosophical inquiry. To use a different metaphor employed in previous chapters, the conception of philosophical questions as tools enables students to be clear about the game of making philosophical progress, including the purpose and method of scoring goals.

My argument is that conceiving of philosophical questions as tools for resolving philosophical problems will enable students to avoid the difficult cases, where alternative conceptions will not, and so this conception is more efficacious for making philosophical progress. I am not arguing that this is the essential nature of philosophical questions, the correct definition of philosophical questions, nor that they cannot be conceptualised in other ways. My argument is simply that it is better for the praxis of P4C to conceive of questions in this way. Such a conception will enable P4C students to articulate their philosophical problems and make progress resolving them, where other conceptions will impede this.

One implication of philosophical questions as tools is that questions are independent of the problems they address, in the same way that declarative sentences are independent of the propositions they declare (see Warren, 1998, footnote 12). Just as we use sentences in normal language to pick out propositions, we use questions to pick out problems. Even though problems are intimately connected with the questions we use to express them, and are often used interchangeably, I argue that to support philosophical progress in P4C, problems are better conceived of as distinguishable from questions.

If someone insisted that questions and problems should not be broken apart as I have done, they would have to show how an alternative account, where there are only questions, could better enable P4C students to avoid the difficult cases from section I (especially cases 5 and 6 where P4C students use
philosophical questions for non-philosophical goals). I argue that for such an account to be effective, it would have to surreptitiously break problems and questions apart and thus actually be a version of the tool conception. For example, it might be argued that a better explanation of difficult case 5 is that students have unarticulated questions that are different from their articulated question, rather than my explanation that they have problems that are different from their empty questions. However, the articulated question-unarticulated question distinction is essentially the same as the question-problem distinction because an unarticulated question is a problem that has not been articulated as a question. Likewise, an account that does not distinguish problems and questions would end up being akin to the tool account when attempting to deal with difficult case 6 where students approach questions like ‘What is justice?’ as questions of legal or dictionary definition. Either 1) the same wording denotes different questions, some of which are not philosophical, and students should address the philosophical version, or 2) the questions can be used philosophically or non-philosophically. But in either case we have surreptitiously arrived back at the tool account. 1) The wording-question distinction is essentially the same as the question-problem distinction (though the tool account which distinguishes two problems identified by the same question seems more plausible than two questions being identified by the same words). 2) The philosophical use-non-philosophical use distinction also implies that questions are philosophical tools that can be used or not used for philosophical purposes. In comparison, the tool account can easily deal with difficult case 6: the form of this question can be used to address philosophical or non-philosophical problems, and to make philosophical progress students should address the philosophical problems.

Nevertheless, it might still be possible to give an alternative conception of philosophical questions that does not break apart questions and problems and which still allows us to avoid the difficult cases. I do not argue that such alternative accounts would be impossible, but I do argue that the tool conception would be a simpler way to explain to P4C students that they need to satisfy three conditions in order to ask questions that will be efficacious for making philosophical progress. On this basis I argue that the tool conception should be preferred in P4C.

A further implication of this conception of philosophical questions is that there is no such thing as a philosophical question. Instead there are questions with a (more or less) philosophical form, questions that are asked with the goal of resolving philosophical problems, and questions which are addressed using philosophical methods. I will, however, sometimes use the term ‘philosophical question’ (or ‘well-formed philosophical question’) as short-hand for a question which has a form, goal and use which make it efficacious for articulating philosophical problems, and for directing philosophical inquiry to resolve these problems.

Summary of reconceptualising philosophical questions
To avoid the impediments to philosophical progress identified in section I, P4C students need to meet three conditions: they should: 1) ask questions with a form that is efficacious for articulating and resolving philosophical problems; 2) ask these questions for the goal of resolving the underlying philosophical problem; and 3) address these questions using philosophical methods. In this section I argued that the best way to enable P4C students to meet these conditions is if philosophical questions are conceptualised as tools for uncovering, articulating and resolving philosophical problems.

I have already examined the second and third conditions in chapter 4. The goal of asking philosophical questions is to resolve philosophical problems, and the philosophical method we use is to reconceptualise inadequate and incongruous conceptions so they are adequate and congruous again. Understanding this will enable P4C students to address questions with a philosophical goal and method so they can avoid the difficulties of case 5 and 6.

However, I have not yet given an account of condition 1, the form that questions need to take to be effective for this job. As tools, questions can be well-formed or poorly-formed for the job of articulating philosophical problems and directing philosophical inquiry to resolve them. In the same way that
scalpels need to be sharp, durable, sterilisable and light-weight to be useful in surgery. Philosophical questions need particular qualities if they are to do their job well. I develop an account of questions that are well-formed for articulating philosophical problems in the next section.

III. Well-formed questions for resolving philosophical problems

In this section I examine what form questions should have if they are to be effective tools for articulating and resolving philosophical problems and thus for enabling P4C students to make philosophical progress. Any question can be used for a philosophical function, but some will be more effective for this, and others, such as those in the difficult cases 1-4 from section I, will impede the possibility of philosophical progress.\(^{42}\)

The P4C literature offers a number of accounts of philosophical questions. I have already argued that these do not sufficiently distinguish philosophical problems from questions, and that this lack of distinction makes it likely that philosophical progress will be impeded in P4C by difficult cases 5 and 6. However, the accounts offered in the P4C literature do provide a useful basis for understanding the form that questions should take if they are to be effective for articulating philosophical problems and steering philosophical inquiry. Some of the features I discuss have a distinctly functional flavour rather than being strictly formal qualities. This is because being well-formed means having a form that can be used in a particular way. So the form of these questions is what enables them to be efficacious tools for the function of articulating and resolving philosophical problems.

The earlier quotation from Splitter & Sharp outlines some of the important features that well-formed philosophical questions must have, as does the following quotation from Cam:

> Philosophical questions are essentially contentious. They don’t call for the correct answer. They demand further investigation and admit of different answers that may have one merit or another. They point to problems that cannot be solved by calculation, or by consulting a book, or by remembering what the teacher has said. They require children to think for themselves  (1995, 15).\(^{43}\)

Because the features identified mirror those of philosophical problems, if a question has them it will be well-formed or efficacious for articulating philosophical problems. I build on these and other similar descriptions from the P4C literature and argue that to be effective for articulating philosophical problems, well-formed philosophical questions should have the following four features:

1) **Conceptual not empirical content:** They should be about the conceptions we use to make sense of the world rather than being about the ‘facts’. In particular, such questions are about philosophically incongruent and inadequate conceptions, not about empirical issues.

2) **Contestable:** They can be answered in multiple, conflicting ways, each of which can be supported by a cogent argument, but none of which settle the question. Cam uses the term “open question” (2003, 61; 2006a, 33) and Burbules uses the term “divergent question” (1993, ch6) to describe this feature of well-formed philosophical questions.

3) **Answerable:** Although there are no uniquely correct or incorrect answers to well-formed philosophical questions, they can be answered in the same way that philosophical problems can be resolved. The answer to a well-formed philosophical question is a resolution to the underlying problem. Unlike nonsense questions they can be given an answer. Unlike questions of taste this answer is more than subjective opinion. Unlike empirical questions the facts do not determine the definitive answer.

\(^{42}\) Although I will present a conception of questions that are well-formed for philosophical inquiry, I acknowledge that questions can be more or less well-formed and more or less effective at articulating philosophical problems.

\(^{43}\) This quotation indicates that philosophical questions point to problems, which is different from what is said in much of the P4C literature. However, this suggestion of the tool conception of philosophical questions is not sufficiently elaborated in the literature to show how to avoid the difficult cases.
We can judge the quality of answers to well-formed philosophical questions on the basis of how well they resolve the problem that the question points to. We cannot decide which are the better answers by conducting an experiment or survey, by reading a book, doing a calculation, or talking to an expert, because these methods will not resolve the underlying philosophical problem. But we can use other more subtle standards such as how well they remove the inadequacy or incongruence we started with, and how well they bring us back to reflective equilibrium.

This would seem to imply that questions that are well-formed for philosophical inquiry do not have right and wrong answers. This is an accurate description in one sense, but not in others. Well-formed philosophical questions can be given ‘right’ answers in the sense of ‘an answer that resolves the problem they articulate’, and they can be given ‘wrong’ answers that do not resolve this problem. Yet as I argued in chapter 4, this sense of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ should not be understood in the sense of ‘true’ or ‘false’ answers, and nor does it imply that all answers are equally good. Well-formed philosophical questions have right and wrong answers only in the sense of answers that ‘work’ or ‘do not work’, and there will be multiple ‘right’ answers which will work more or less well.

4) Require complex thinking to answer: Because questions that are well-formed for resolving philosophical problems are about our conceptions rather than the ‘facts’, neither gathering empirical information nor applying established procedures from such disciplines as mathematics, science or the social sciences, is sufficient to determine an answer. Instead they can only be answered through complex intellectual inquiry that involves making a number of interrelated and often demanding cognitive moves about abstract and intangible issues. Thus to answer well-formed philosophical questions we need to do such things as, “… clarify meanings, uncover assumptions and presuppositions, analyse concepts, consider the validity of reasoning processes, and investigate the implications of ideas and the consequences in human life of holding certain ideas rather than others” (Lipman, et al., 1980, 108). I examine the complex thinking and inquiry needed for answering philosophical questions in chapter 6 when I discuss philosophical inquiry.

In light of these features, a question like ‘Why is he so mean?’ would not be well-formed for philosophical inquiry. Even though it might be contestable and requires complex thinking, it is not about our conceptions, but is about some facts about the world - the cause or explanation of his meanness. ‘Do different cultures all think that love is important for marriage?’ is also poorly-formed for philosophical inquiry, because it is also about the facts, and can be given a settled answer with some empirical research. P4C students commonly ask poorly-formed questions like these examples, yet they can be modified to make them more well-formed for philosophical inquiry, such as ‘Is meanness best understood as a choice, a personality trait, or an emotion?’ or ‘What does it mean to be in love?’

Summary of well-formed questions for resolving philosophical problems

One impediment to progress that occurs in P4C is when students fail to clearly articulate the philosophical problem they want to resolve. Thus to make philosophical progress, P4C students need to address questions that are well formed for articulating and resolving their philosophical problem. Their questions should be about incongruous and inadequate conceptions, not empirical issues, and it should be possible to give them a contestable answer that works to resolve the underlying problem, and which is based on complex thinking and inquiry. This does not mean that articulating philosophical problems is now easy, but it does mean that students have a heuristic and propaedeutic conception that will scaffold them to develop questions with a form that will be useful for this task.

However, this conception does not yet enable P4C students to avoid the third and fourth difficult cases from section I, where they ask well-formed philosophical questions that do not clearly articulate their specific problem. In the next section, to deal with these difficulties, I will extend the conception of well-formed questions so it can help students to distinguish between different philosophical problems and to articulate the particular problem they are interested in.
IV. Types of questions well-formed for philosophical inquiry

Section III described well-formed philosophical questions as if they were all of one type. This conception enables students to distinguish between questions that are useful for making philosophical progress and those that are not, but it does not give any guidance for honing a question so it is useful for resolving a particular philosophical problem. If students only have this conception to work with, this limits their ability to make philosophical progress in the same way that doing surgery with only a scalpel limits proper health care. In this section I present several types of questions which are well-formed for philosophical inquiry and which P4C students can use to more precisely distinguish and articulate their particular philosophical problem.

Using the conception of philosophical questions that I have given so far, students might ask the question ‘Can chickens think?’ Even though this question has an appropriate form for philosophical inquiry (though it is still ambiguous), and even if students understand that this question is for articulating an incongruity or inadequacy in our conceptions about minds, thinking and animals (not for doing empirical research), it is still not a sharp enough tool to precisely articulate the problem involved. Without more precise articulation, if students try to resolve the problem, they may make little progress because they confuse different facets of the philosophical problem or they miss the main impact of the problem. In particular, the question does not distinguish between epistemological, metaphysical or even ethical facets of this problem. Some students may attempt to solve the epistemological problem of how we know whether chickens can think, others address the metaphysical problem of what thinking is and still others talk about the ethical problem of how we should treat beings that think.

This confusion can be resolved if students have more a more sophisticated set of tools for making fine-grained distinctions between different kinds of philosophical problems. Just as a surgeon needs access to a variety of instruments for complex surgery, so a philosopher needs access to a variety of types of questions to make philosophical progress. I will start by outlining some of the types of philosophical questions described in the P4C literature. Then to make this categorisation more efficacious for P4C, I will expand the number of question types, explain each of these, and finish with an illustration.

Despite being ‘fuzzy’, the categories of questions I present are useful for directing philosophical inquiry and making philosophical progress. I take a ‘bricolage’ approach in this section (as described in chapter 1 in the methods of my philosophical research). My account of philosophical questions is useful for P4C students seeking to make progress in the same way that Newtonian physics is useful for engineers constructing bridges, or geocentric astronomy is useful for navigation, even though none of these can be defended as the most comprehensive, precise, or accurate theories. I provide a wide, but not exhaustive, range of philosophical questioning tools, rather than a complete, precise, account of all possible types of philosophical questions, because a more comprehensive approach would be too complicated to be useful in P4C. My intention is thus to present tools, efficacious for making philosophical progress in P4C, rather than the most accurate or essential categories of philosophical question.

Classifying philosophical questions

Probably the easiest way to classify philosophical questions is according to the pre-existing classification of the fields of Western philosophy such as Philosophy of Mind, Metaphysics, Ethics and Political Philosophy. I will follow this classification method.

One way to understand the fields of philosophy is as groups of fundamental questions about principal areas of human knowledge and experience (Beardsley & Beardsley, 1965). For example, Philosophy of Art consists of fundamental questions about art while Ethics consists of fundamental questions about right and wrong. From this perspective, the fields of philosophy organise questions according to similarity of subject matter.

A second way to understand at least some of the fields of philosophy is as groups of questions that approach the same sorts of problem about a variety of subjects. For example Metaphysics questions
address problematic issues about essences or the fundamental make-up of the world such as the ontology of art works, the nature of knowledge, or the existence of God. Thus, the fields of philosophy sometimes group philosophical questions according to similarity of the type of problem addressed rather than similarity of subject matter.

For the purpose of supporting philosophical progress in P4C, the second alternative is the better way to classify types of philosophical questions. Being able to ask questions about different kinds of philosophical problems will help P4C students to make philosophical progress more than being able to ask questions about different topics. Students can easily grasp that they can ask questions about the mind, art, or society, but they need more help identifying and articulating types of philosophical problems about the different topics.

Cam and Kovach have each presented simple divisions of types of questions according to the type of problem they address. Cam (2006, 23-26) divides philosophical questions into value and concept questions. Kovach (2005) distinguishes three different directions a philosophical discussion can go – epistemological, ethical and conceptual. These are two or three of the most accessible categories of philosophical questions and so are very useful for P4C teachers and students.

However, there are other categories, so once students have a grasp of these first types of questions, I recommend introducing them to other types of question: evaluative, definitional meaning, ontological, phenomenological, and epistemological. I argue that this expanded classification is more useful for precisely articulating philosophical problems. Each type of question picks out a prominent area of philosophy and a characteristic type of philosophical problem associated with that area. By understanding the differences, P4C teachers and students will be able to more precisely identify the particular problem they want to resolve and they will be more effective at making progress resolving it.

I have not included ‘logic’ as a distinct type of philosophical question for two reasons. First, many logic questions - such as ‘Is that argument valid and sound?’ - do not point to philosophical problems and can be given Settled answers, and so they are not philosophical questions (although they are essential to the philosophical method). Second, logic questions tend to be a group of questions about the same topic, not about the same sort of problem. They include evaluative and epistemological problems about the topics of reasoning, proof, argument, justification and certainty.

I have included ‘evaluative’ as a category of philosophical questions rather than ‘ethics’, because I take ethics questions to be a sub-set of evaluative questions that are about a specific subject matter – human behaviour. ‘Evaluative’ is a broader category than ‘ethical’ because evaluative questions address problems about social structures, aesthetic issues such as beauty as well as about human behaviour.

Description of the types of philosophical question

In this sub-section I describe and illustrate the five different types of philosophical questions I have identified. Each type of question points to a different kind or facet of a philosophical problem and can be used pedagogically to help P4C students and teachers to formulate questions that more precisely articulate their philosophical problems. To learn to employ these questioning tools, P4C students can use the question stem and fill in the gap with a concept that they find philosophically problematic. For example, if they find stealing to be philosophically problematic, they could ask an evaluative question, ‘Is it right to steal?’ or a definitional meaning question, ‘What does stealing mean?’

**Evaluative**: Evaluative questions pick out philosophical problems about our values, such as inadequate conceptions of what is right, fair and beautiful, what we should or should not do and the justification of our values and preferences (Cam, 2006a, 23-24). These questions help us to resolve values dilemmas or incongruities so we can judge what does or does not have value and how we should act. Some useful question stems are: Is it right to _____? Is it wrong to _____? Should we _____? or, Is _____ valuable? For example, if we were addressing evaluative problems about friendship, we could ask:

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44 The development of this classification is described in Golding (2005b, 2006a, 2008).
• Should you remain friends with someone who treats you badly?
• Is it wrong to have no friends?
• What is the right way to treat your friends?
• Is friendship valuable? Why?

**Definitional meaning**: Definitional meaning questions pick out philosophical problems about the meaning of concepts, the relationships between them, or their implications. These questions help us to resolve inadequacy and incongruity in our understanding of different concepts, or their relationships. Some useful question stems are: What does _____ mean? Does _____ mean the same as _____? For example, if we were addressing definitional meaning problems related to stealing, we could ask:

- What does ‘stealing’ mean?
- How is ‘lying’ like ‘stealing’?
- Does ‘stealing’ mean the same as ‘borrowing without asking’?
- Can we consistently say that someone is a thief and that they are a good person?

**Ontological**: Ontological questions pick out philosophical problems about reality and about the essence of what exists, rather than about the meaning of the concepts we use. They enable us to examine problems related to the nature of both physical entities such as tables and atoms, and the nature of abstract entities such as ideas and numbers. These questions help us articulate and resolve incongruities and inadequacies about our conceptions of the fundamental make-up of what we find in the world. Some useful question stems are: Is _____ real? or What is _____? For example, if we were addressing ontological problems related to time, we could ask:

- What is time?
- Is time real? In the same way as a chair?
- Is time a human invention?
- Is time anything more than change? What is the essential nature of time?

**Phenomenological**: Phenomenological questions pick out philosophical problems about the appearance, nature and meaning of our experiences, and the interpretation of our lives as they are lived. Rather than investigating what our concepts mean or the essence of things, when we ask phenomenological questions we seek to address incongruities and inadequacies in our understanding of the objects of our experience (Howarth, 2005, 791). These questions help us to resolve perplexity about what our experiences are like, how they appear to us, their pre-conditions, or what they mean to us. Some useful question stems are: How do we experience _____? or What is the importance of _____ in our lives? For example, if we were addressing phenomenological problems about love, we could ask:

- What is it like to be in love?
- What is our experience of loving someone?
- Does our experience of someone change when we start loving them? When we stop loving them?
- What is the meaning or importance of love in our lives?

**Epistemological**: Epistemological questions pick out philosophical problems about our knowledge, judgements and justification as well as our criteria for certainty, belief and evidence. These questions help us to resolve what does not make sense about what we know, how we know, and what criteria we use to judge. Some useful question stems are: How can we know _____? Which criteria could we use to judge _____? For example, if we were addressing epistemic problems about fairness, we could ask:

- How can we know what is fair?
- Which criteria could we use to judge if a particular action were fair?
- Are we justified in believing that fairness is good?
- Why should I believe that it is fair, for example, to punish criminals?
Box 10: Illustration of questions that articulate different philosophical problems about culture

Evaluative
- Are cultural traditions always valuable? Are they always right?
- Are some cultures, cultural practices or customs, better than others?
- Is our culture better or worse (or both) than it was in the past?

Definitional meaning
- What does ‘culture’ mean?
- What is the difference between ‘culture’ and ‘tradition’?
- If something is part of our culture, does this also mean it is part of our identity?

Ontological
- Is culture what we think, what we do or just where we come from?
- Is culture something we value or just something we share?
- Do cultures progress to some ideal?

Phenomenological
- What is our experience of our own culture? Do we notice our own culture?
- Is this different from our experience of other cultures?
- What is the meaning of culture for how we live our lives?

Epistemological
- How do we know which culture we come from?
- How do we tell the difference between one culture and another?
- Can we ever know what it is like to be from a different culture to our own?

Box 11: Illustration of questions that articulate different philosophical problems about beauty

Evaluative
- Is beauty valuable? Why or why not?
- Are beautiful things or people more valuable than ugly things or people?
- Is it wrong to destroy beauty?
- Is beauty more important than justice?

Definitional meaning
- What does ‘beauty’ mean?
- What is the difference between ‘beautiful’ and ‘pretty’?
- What is the difference between ‘inner beauty’ and ‘surface beauty’?

Ontological
- Is beauty more than just skin deep?
- Is beauty only in the eye of the beholder?
- Is beauty necessary in art?

Phenomenological
- What effect does an experience of beauty have on us?
- What is it like to see something as beautiful?

Epistemological
- What evidence do we need to determine if something is beautiful or not?
- Who defines beauty?
Summary of types of well-formed questions for philosophical inquiry

I have presented five types of question forms as tools to help P4C students to articulate and resolve their particular philosophical problems. The categories are not intended to be precise and discrete because this would make them un-useable by P4C students, and because any form of question can be used in a variety of ways. The ambiguity of the categories is shown in the following examples:

- ‘Are some things wrong to think?’ could be either phenomenological (Do we experience some thoughts as wrong?) or evaluative (Should we avoid certain thoughts?)
- ‘How do we reason?’ might be epistemological (How do we judge what is reasoning?), phenomenological (What is my experience of good reasoning?), or even a non-philosophical question asking for empirical data (Which part of the brain is used when we reason?)

Even though the categories are necessarily imprecise and ambiguous, they are useful tools. Asking questions with the forms I have described will enable P4C students to more precisely identify their philosophical problems and so make it easier for them to make philosophical progress resolving them.

V. Philosophical progress and philosophical questions

In this chapter I have argued that the problem-resolution conception of philosophical progress needs to be supplemented with a conception of questions as tools for articulating philosophical problems. To make philosophical progress, we must address questions for a philosophical goal, using philosophical methods, and the questions we address must have a form suitable for this goal and these methods. If P4C students conceive of philosophical questions in this way they will avoid some of the impediments to progress which would otherwise occur, and they will be able to ask questions which are efficacious for making philosophical progress. Nevertheless, this conception is a heuristic which does not present a fool-proof recipe, and experimentation is still required to articulate a philosophical problem.

The conception of philosophical questions as tools for resolving philosophical problems also indicates a number of additional ways of making progress at the outset of a philosophical inquiry. We can make progress by identifying a philosophical problem, and also by taking a problem that was previously a mere unarticulated puzzlement and formulating it as a question that is amenable to philosophical inquiry and resolution. Alternatively we might make progress by moving from a question that does not articulate a philosophical problem, or does not articulate our philosophical problem, to one that does. We can also make progress by reformulating a question so it better articulates a philosophical problem and is more amenable to philosophical resolution. This is progress by moving from questions that are badly-formed to questions that are well-formed for philosophical inquiry or from less to more well-formed philosophical questions. For example, P4C students might progress by first identifying a problematic conception which they attempt to articulate as the question ‘Why did Arthur get angry?’ which is not a sharp tool for philosophical inquiry. They then make additional progress by reformulating the question to ‘Why do people get angry?’ which is sharper but still fairly vague about a philosophical problem. They make further progress by refining their question to ‘What is anger?’ or ‘Is anger always bad?’ which are much sharper instruments for philosophical inquiry.45 In these ways, P4C students can make philosophical progress by reaching what I will call in chapter 6, philosophical milestones which indicate progress during the movement from problem to resolution.

This conception of philosophical questions supports P4C students to make philosophical progress at the initial stages of a philosophical inquiry, when they are framing a problem to resolve. In the next chapter I consider the support they will need for the rest of inquiry process from articulated problem to resolution.

6. A framework for philosophical inquiry

For there to be inquiry, there must be some doubt that all is well, some recognition that one’s situation contains troubling difficulties and is somehow problematic. There must be self-correcting investigation that takes all considerations into account and constructs alternative hypotheses as ways in which the problem can be resolved. Above all, inquiry involves questioning (Lipman, 2003, 94-95).

The path from philosophical problem to philosophical resolution is complex and unpredictable and it is difficult to judge when we are on track and moving forward. Without guidance, P4C students (and teachers) will likely become intellectually lost, not knowing how to proceed. To enable them to find their way and judge what to do to make philosophical progress, P4C students need the philosophical equivalent of navigation advice such as “climb a tree” or “follow a ridge line or a river”.

In this chapter I present this philosophical navigation advice in the form of a framework for inquiry that, I argue, enables P4C students to make philosophical progress. In chapter 3 I argued that philosophical progress in P4C can be understood as following the inquiry where it leads, and in chapter 4 I elaborated what this entails in terms of the movement from a philosophical problem to a philosophical resolution. In chapter 5 I examined the initial stages of the inquiry process, which involves formulating questions that articulate a philosophical problem. This chapter gives further details about the overall process of following the inquiry where it leads from the articulation of a philosophical problem to reaching a philosophical resolution, encapsulating this in a framework for inquiry with four components:

1. A plan for philosophical inquiry, broken into a sequence of stages (Box 12)
2. Philosophical moves to be made for each stage in the inquiry (Box 13)
3. Philosophical milestones or the products of each stage in the inquiry (Box 14)
4. Questions to prompt the moves to be made and the milestones to be produced (Box 15)

This framework describes steps, which if taken, will reliably lead to resolving philosophical problems, and thus which enable P4C students to plan their inquiry, break it into manageable stages and give it a direction.\(^\text{46}\) It does not stipulate a script that must be followed, or a recipe that will guarantee success, but it does provide an invaluable reference point that can be used by P4C students to judge where they are and what will likely move them forward. Put metaphorically, the framework does not constitute the game of making progress in philosophical inquiry, but it does describe a sequence of moves that will likely result in a goal.

\(^{46}\) This framework is based on a Deweyan conception of inquiry and expands the simple inquiry process described in chapter 2. The development of this framework is documented in Golding (2002, 2004, 20-21 & 2006b). Gregory (2007, 2008) has also developed a similar framework for inquiry, which incorporates similar stages, moves, products, and prompt questions, but which is more complex and so perhaps best suited for the oldest and most experienced students. My version is also reasonably sophisticated but it can be simplified for younger and more novice students.
P4C teachers and students can use the framework as a heuristic to judge how far they have come in the inquiry and what milestones have been accomplished (“We have just suggested possible resolutions” and “Good suggestion Jim”). Then, to advance the inquiry, they can judge what stage of inquiry they should go to next and which moves would be useful to make at this stage (“Next we need to evaluate the reasons for and against”). They can prompt these moves and milestones with questions (“What is a reason to agree? What is a reason to disagree?”). At first a P4C teacher would suggest moves, identify milestones and ask prompt questions, but she would do this so that eventually this responsibility will be distributed across the whole class and the students can use the framework to guide their own philosophical progress.\textsuperscript{47}

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\textsuperscript{47}In this chapter I will briefly address how a P4C teacher can use this framework to enable their students to learn to make philosophical progress. In chapter 8 I will go into more detail, in particular, examining how the teacher can provide guidance without indoctrinating their students.
I. Stages of philosophical inquiry

The framework I present divides philosophical inquiry into a sequence of stages or steps. Each stage gives a manageable task for students to complete, and when these tasks are sequenced in the order given, they make it more likely that students will make progress towards a resolution. In this section I show that by planning their inquiry according to these stages, P4C students can overcome a number of impediments to progress. I then argue that the framework of stages serves an essential heuristic, propaedeutic and pedagogical function. I finish by discussing each of the seven stages in sequence, and illustrate how the stages can be used to support philosophical progress in P4C.\(^\text{48}\)

Because making philosophical progress involves a complex and dynamic movement full of creative leaps (as described in chapter 3), P4C students need a clear framework to guide their inquiry or they are liable to become intellectually lost. However, in chapter 3 I argued that the best guidance currently available, “follow the inquiry where it leads”, is not adequate for P4C because it does not provide explicit scaffolding that P4C students and teachers can use to judge what to do to advance their inquiry.

Without a means of guiding their inquiry, P4C students will be impeded from making progress as illustrated in Box 4 from chapter 1. Just as Dewey describes (1933, 76), the students easily lose their bearings, aimlessly wander, shift from topic to topic seemingly at random and jump to conclusions without considering their merit. They are seemingly unable to sequence their thinking in a way that would be efficacious for making progress.\(^\text{49}\) Sometimes they make moves that are not useful for philosophical inquiry, such as giving irrelevant stream-of-consciousness anecdotes. At other times, they make moves that are frequently useful for philosophical inquiry, but they make them at inappropriate times when they impede progress. For example, although disagreement and challenge is essential for making philosophical progress, student 1 challenges the ideas suggested before they have been elaborated and understood and therefore prematurely rejects lines of inquiry that might have been fruitful. Creative suggestions are also important for making philosophical progress, but student 5 suggests racism may have something to do with making fun of people before any of the previous ideas have been fully explored, thus preventing the class from making progress pursuing them. A further impediment for philosophical progress from the illustration is that the students do not understand the significance of what they achieve in their inquiry. For example, various important suggestions are made which could be developed into a resolution to their problem, but these are ignored and not celebrated as possible first steps in the process of making progress.

By guiding their inquiry using the stages of inquiry, P4C students can avoid these sorts of impediments. At any point in their inquiry they can refer to the stages to decide what they have achieved so far, and what stage they should move to next to make further progress. They can use the stages to orchestrate the moves they make so they are likely to make progress, and to evaluate the milestones they reach as progress on the path from philosophical problem to resolution.

Although I present the stages in a seemingly linear and mechanistic sequence in Box 12, I do not suggest that this is the most accurate description of philosophical inquiry, nor am I stipulating how philosophical inquiry should proceed. Instead I argue that it is precisely because philosophical inquiry is not linear and mechanistic, and not broken into discrete stages, that P4C needs a linear sequence of

\(^{48}\) My account of the stages of philosophical inquiry is based on Dewey’s general account of inquiry (1933, ch.1 sec. 2). More specifically, my account is developed from Lipman’s adaptation of this Deweyan process so that it explicitly describes philosophical inquiry (2003, 101-103; 2004c, 3-7; & Lipman, et al., 1980, 113-124). It is also influenced by similar accounts from: Burgh, et al., (2006, 117-119), and Cam (2006a, 12-28; 2006b, 160-162). I extend these conceptions by explicitly linking the inquiry process they describe to the problem-resolution conception of philosophical progress.

\(^{49}\) In the second half of the illustration their thinking is clearly sequenced to move them towards a conclusion. Yet this only occurs because the teacher directs, controls and restricts the inquiry so it gets to a teacher-determined end-point rather than because the students are making progress following the inquiry where it leads.
stages of inquiry. The stages provide a valuable heuristic device that can be used as a reference point for teachers and students to get their bearings and find a productive path forward; as a propaedeutic device that novices can use to help them master philosophical inquiry; and thus as a pedagogical device to assist P4C students to learn to make philosophical progress.50

The stages of inquiry provide a heuristic to make philosophical inquiry manageable. Philosophical inquiry is always towards a resolution, but sometimes the path tacks one way and sometimes another (as described in chapter 3). To make progress we often have to try lines of inquiry to see where they lead, then back-track if they turn out to be fruitless. We also have to revisit and revise decisions about the path we should take in light of contributions from later stages. To keep their bearings in such an inquiry, students need a sequence of steps they can take which they can reference to judge which step they have just completed and which step might next be useful, including which steps need to be revisited. For example, students might have trouble suggesting possible resolutions to their problem. By referencing the stages of inquiry, they can realise that their trouble occurs because the original formulation of the problem was flawed, and that to make progress they should go back to the initial stages of inquiry and reformulate their question. Alternatively, when analysing a suggested resolution they might discover it has unanticipated implications, and by referencing the stages of inquiry, they realise they need to go back to the suggestion stage and refine the suggestion.

The stages of philosophical inquiry provide a heuristic for P4C students in the same way that a design process provides a heuristic for designers. To come up with a successful design, a designer might go through something like the following stages: 1) Design brief. 2) Define the parameters of the problems involved and the criteria for success. 3) Devise possible solutions. 4) Analyse and evaluate these possible solutions according to the criteria. 5) Choose the best solution. 6) Manufacture. P4C students can use the stages of inquiry in a similar way to get to a successful resolution.

Alternatively, if resolving a philosophical problem is thought to involve more discovery than invention, the stages of inquiry are like the heuristic we might use to diagnose an illness. A doctor would start with a detailed examination and case history. Next they would interpret their observations in light of their medical knowledge of what is normal. From this they would hypothesise possible ailments, and then work out a method to test their hypothesis, such as a blood test. Finally, if the test comes back positive, they would prescribe an appropriate treatment, and if it is negative they would go back to an alternative hypothesis.

In the above examples a heuristic makes it more likely (but not certain) that we will achieve a result, even though we do not know what this result will be when we start. The examples also show how we make progress by taking what seem to be false paths and then having to go back to the ‘drawing board’. If by following the heuristic we discover “that design is too ugly”, “it’s not swine flu” or “that conception does not resolve the philosophical problem”, we have made progress by ruling out one line of inquiry, and we can make further progress by going back to an earlier stage and starting again.

The stages of inquiry also provide propaedeutic support for P4C students. In chapter 3, one of my criticisms of ‘following the inquiry where it leads’ as a conception of progress, was that it was overly intuitive and thus provides no guidance for novices. Here I argue that if P4C students practise a more

50 These stages are also intended to be compatible with different styles and methods of resolving philosophical problems. I argue that all philosophical methods involve all the stages, but they differ in their emphasis on different stages. ‘Analytic’ philosophers tend to emphasise the testing of possible resolutions through analysis and argumentation. ‘Continental’ philosophers such as Deleuze and Guattari (1994) emphasise the creation of resolutions as the most important stage of philosophical inquiry. Also different philosophical practices tend to apply the different stages in different ways. ‘Continental’ philosophers tend to focus on the analysis of philosophical texts in the different stages of inquiry, whereas many analytic philosophers tend to rely more on logico-linguistic analysis of our concepts or intuitions. Despite being flexible enough to apply to diverse philosophical practices, the stages of the inquiry process are also specific enough to support P4C students to make philosophical progress.
linear, simplified version of inquiry this will enable them to learn to make the more intuitive and creative leaps needed for following the inquiry where it leads. As a famous jazz musician said, they have to practise and practise and practise until they can “forget that stuff and wail”. They start by using a version of the stages at the appropriate level of sophistication for their philosophical expertise, and they use it in a simple mechanistic and linear fashion as they begin to learn to make philosophical progress. But as they become more expert, they can use more sophisticated versions of the framework and, through practise, their philosophical inquiry becomes more spontaneous and playful.

In the rest of this section I elaborate the sequence of seven stages of philosophical inquiry from Box 12, and then illustrate how they can be used to support philosophical progress.

1. **Apprehending the problem:** Inquiry starts when we judge a situation to be philosophically problematic, or as I have described it in chapter 4, when we judge our conceptions to be philosophically incongruous or inadequate. Without this stage, there is no philosophical inquiry. Once we have chosen a problem to inquire into, providing a resolution becomes the goal of the inquiry and thus a reference point so we can keep our bearings as we try out various paths.

2. **Problem framing:** In order to make progress resolving our problem, the next useful step is to frame the problem as a question, or set of questions, which are amenable to being resolved, and which set an agenda for the inquiry. If we do not clearly frame our problem, the subsequent inquiry is likely to founder (as discussed in chapter 5).

The problem framing stage involves not only articulating questions to investigate, but also placing them in an order that is efficacious for eventually arriving at a resolution of our main problem. For example, we may have to answer the question ‘What is a friend?’ before we can solve our main problem ‘Is it wrong to tell a hurtful truth to a friend?’

3. **Suggesting:** If we want to move closer to a resolution to the problem, the most useful next step is to suggest a range of possible resolutions, which means suggesting alternative conceptions under which the original problem disappears (as I explained in chapter 4). This stage is important for making philosophical progress because we are more likely to produce a defensible resolution to our problem if we consider a range of possibilities rather than only the first one that occurs to us.

We hypothesise possible resolutions through a process of abduction, or “the informed generation of likely hypotheses” (Gregory, 2007, 67: citing Peirce, 1934a). In other words we suggest resolutions that are likely to answer our questions, given what we know about the problem. For example, if a philosophical problem arises because treating races differently sometimes seems bad (not hiring people of a certain race) but sometimes seems good (giving scholarships to those of a particular race), and we articulate this as the question ‘Is racism always bad?’ then a possible resolution would be a conception of racism that makes it plain whether, and in what circumstances, racism is ethically acceptable.

4. **Elaborating:** To make further progress, we should next elaborate each suggested resolution so we understand them fully and can make an informed judgement about which best resolves our problem. We elaborate the suggested resolutions by clarifying, restating, and interpreting them, and by giving examples, making distinctions and contextualising or quantifying them.

5. **Reasoning and Analysing:** The next step which is likely to move us closer to a resolution is to analyse the elaborated suggestions by teasing out their unforeseen implications, hidden meanings, underlying assumptions and their ‘fit’ with other conceptions. Dewey (1938) and Cam (2006a) call this a process of reasoning, which Hildebrand explains:

> Here “reasoning” is meant in a restricted sense; i.e., the ability to recognise valid and invalid forms of inference, the examination of a hypothesis for its logical consequences, or perhaps the relation of a hypothesis to other factors which might determine whether and how it could be tested (1999, 384).

Reasoning and analysis is only possible after we have elaborated the suggested resolutions and, in turn, this makes it possible to test and evaluate the suggested resolutions.
6. **Testing and critically evaluating:** Previous to this stage there has been no critical evaluation of the suggested resolutions. If we engage in critique too early in the inquiry process, before we have fully elaborated and analysed our possible resolutions, we are likely to prematurely reject conceptions capable of resolving our problems or accept inadequate resolutions. It is only at this stage, after detailed elaboration, analysis and reasoning that we are in a position to legitimately evaluate the different possible resolutions. We test a proposed resolution to see if:

- The problem no longer occurs within this new conception, and if it allows for the intellectual navigation which the problem had prevented
- It is internally consistent
- It is consistent with empirical evidence and other important settled conceptions
- It resolves more of the currently identified philosophical problems, and leads to more new and fruitful lines of inquiry, than the alternatives.

Because this is a complex judgement, we can evaluate suggested resolutions using the heuristic criteria discussed in chapter 4, Box 9, and judge whether a resolution is, for instance, clearer or deeper than alternatives. Put another way, we weigh up the reasons for a resolution (based on how it is in equilibrium with some rational considerations) and the reasons against a resolution (based on how it is out of equilibrium with other rational considerations).

The results of this stage of inquiry is the rejection of some possible resolutions, the modification of others, and the tentative acceptance of yet others.\(^51\)

7. **Resolving:** The previous stages put us in a position where we can reach the final goal of philosophical inquiry. After considering a range of alternatives in some depth, and testing and evaluating each one, we can now make a reasoned judgement about which one produces the most adequate and congruent resolution of our initial problem, and therefore which one we will adopt as our resolution. If we had not gone through the previous stages and had only considered a narrow range of possibilities, considered them superficially, or if we did not test and evaluate them, we would not produce a warranted resolution, and would produce nothing more than a mere opinion.

I illustrate how the stages of philosophical inquiry can be used to guide philosophical progress in the following excerpts from a P4C inquiry (I will return to this example throughout this chapter):

- After reading a story where the characters act in a racist manner, the teacher knows from referring to the stages of inquiry that a useful first step is for their students to identify philosophical problems and formulate them as questions that they can inquire about. The teacher asks: “What questions does this raise?” One of the students responds with: “One question we should answer is: What is racism?”

- Once a question is formulated, the teacher knows that their students will likely want to immediately present and argue for their answers. But to avoid bringing the inquiry to a premature close before a warranted resolution is developed, the teacher can see from the stages of inquiry that it would be useful if students first suggest a range of possible resolutions. The teacher prompts this stage by asking: “What suggestions are there about what racism is?” The first main suggestion offered by students is: “Racism is treating races differently.”

- Once a range of suggestions are offered and explored, the teacher knows that students can progress to the next stage of inquiry by challenging and testing these suggestions. To encourage

\(^51\) Gregory also argues that potential philosophical resolutions should be tested outside the dialogue. “At some point in this stage of the inquiry dialogue is postponed while the fruits of the preceding dialogue – hypotheses that have survived dialogical critique – are given experiment in experience outside of the dialogue circle. New meanings of old concepts should be tested in a variety of discursive contexts, especially outside the classroom…. New value propositions such as kinds of health and friendship worth cultivating should be acted on and evaluated against the resulting qualitative experience” (2007, 73).
students to challenge the first main suggestion they ask: “Are there any counter-examples to the idea that racism is treating races differently?” One counter-example that was suggested was: “What about only auditioning Māori actors to play the role of the Māori school-teacher? We treat the races differently, but this can’t be racism.”

- The counter-example shows that the suggested resolution did not resolve the problem of what racism is. The students are still left perplexed about whether it is racist to only allow Māori actors to play Māori characters. At this point, the teacher again consults the stages of inquiry and judges that one way to proceed is to go back to an earlier stage and refine the suggested resolution so it will be more likely to resolve the original problem. “Can we modify the original suggestion to deal with the counter-example?” the teacher asks. In response, a student refines the original suggestion: “We could refine the idea by saying: Racism is unfairly treating races differently.”

II. Philosophical moves

Philosophical moves are actions taken for the purpose of making philosophical progress, just as we make moves in a game to score a goal. You pass a ball in rugby or tackle an opponent when you judge that these moves will bring your team closer to scoring a try. In the same way, we make philosophical moves when we judge that they will take us closer to resolving the problem we started with. In the case of P4C, the philosophical moves are thinking moves because, as I argued in chapter 5, the only way to resolve philosophical problems is through complex thinking such as asking questions, considering alternatives, making inferences, considering reasons and drawing conclusions.

Without guidance, P4C students rarely know which thinking moves are likely to be effective for making philosophical progress, nor when they should make these moves. They tend to say the first thing that occurs to them and so haphazardly ask questions, evaluate, clarify or give reasons interspersed with anecdotes and irrelevant comments (as discussed in section I). Making moves in this almost random fashion, without orchestration, will be unlikely to resolve their problem.

The stages of philosophical inquiry enable effective orchestration of philosophical moves. As shown in Box 13, each stage is associated with different types of thinking move, and the sequence of stages shows how to purposefully pattern our thinking moves so we are more likely to make philosophical progress. The overall criterion for judging which move to make, and when to make it, is which move is likely to advance this inquiry closer to a resolution, and the stages of inquiry assist P4C students in making this complex judgement. They can judge which stage they are currently at by looking at which moves have been made, and then they judge which move would enable them to complete their current stage or advance to the next stage and thus bring them closer to a resolution. For example, if students have suggested possible resolutions, the next stage is elaboration, so their next move could be to say something like “Building on that you could say …” or “An example of this is…”

The list of philosophical moves in Box 13 gives particularly useful scaffolding because it gives concrete and explicit instructions about how to make these moves by saying or writing the listed phrases. Students tend not to understand more abstract descriptions of philosophical moves like ‘analyse’ or ‘evaluate’ unless they also understand the concrete phrases and behaviours that these moves consist of, such as ‘The definition of … is …’ and ‘one reason to agree is … but a reason to disagree is …’ These concrete phrases, organised according to the stages of inquiry, make it is easier for students to identify the right move at the right time, and then to practise and internalise these moves.

52 The account of philosophical moves I present is based on the philosophical moves identified in the P4C literature (Lipman, et al., 1980, 110-128; Lipman, 1988, 201-206; 2003, ch8; Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 9-10) and is detailed in Golding (2005a, 2005b, 2006b). I have sequenced the moves identified in the literature according to the stages of inquiry for resolving philosophical problems. Gregory (2007) has done similarly.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 13: Philosophical moves</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Apprehending the problem</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Problem framing</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Suggesting</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Elaborating</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Reasoning &amp; analysing</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Testing &amp; evaluating</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Resolving</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Reflecting</strong></td>
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</table>

### Notes:

- … is interesting because …
- I see… I feel … I think …
- I wonder …
- One puzzle is …
- This is important to discuss because …
- This is problematic because …
- One question this raises is …
- We need to answer … first because …
- One resolution might be …
- Maybe … / How about … / What if …
- … answers … because …
- Building on that you could say …
- Another way of saying that is …
- An example/analogy is …
- … means …
- The definition of … is …
- … is connected to …
- … is different from …
- That would mean …
- That assumes …
- We haven’t considered …
- Someone might think … because…
- A reason for … is …
- A reason against … is …
- An example/counter-example is …
- We can test possible resolutions by …
- The criteria we can use to judge are …
- … meets/doesn’t meet the criteria
- … resolves the problem because …
- … is defensible because …
- We have resolved … because …
- We have not resolved …
- A conclusion we can draw is …
- … best resolves the problem because …
- New problems to consider are …
- We are trying to …
- We are/aren’t progressing because …
- Now we are …
- … helps us because …
- Now we should …
P4C students can judge whether they have completed a move by judging whether they have done enough to advance their particular inquiry to a new stage. For example, have they considered sufficient alternatives? Have these been elaborated adequately? In particular they should not attempt to complete a move to an absolute standard, as this would impede progress (Walton, 1998). Even though moves such as clarification and considering alternatives are useful in philosophical inquiry, progress is hampered by over-clarifying or exhaustive consideration of all implications, because we get stuck making these moves, lose sight of our original problem, and get no closer to a resolution. For example, if we are trying to resolve the problem of whether it is wrong to tell a hurtful truth to a friend, some discussion of what we mean by ‘a friend’ is essential to make progress, but being overly pedantic about the exact conditions for friendship will prevent us from even considering the problem we are trying to resolve. We make progress by settling the issue of what counts as a friend in the Deweyan sense where we can use our settled conception to help us resolve the main problem.

In the following, I extend the illustration of the stages of inquiry from the previous section by describing some of the moves made to advance the inquiry. The moves are sequenced according to the stages of inquiry, and each is a key point of progress in the overall philosophical inquiry.

- One student makes a questioning move: “One question I have is: What is racism?”
- Later, a student suggests a resolution: “My suggestion is that racism is treating races differently.”
- After elaborating the suggestions, the next move is a challenge: “A counter-example to that idea is auditioning Māori actors to play the role of the Māori school-teacher. We treat the races differently, but this can’t be racism.”
- In response, a student refines the original suggestion: “We could refine the idea by saying: Racism is unfairly treating races differently.”

III. Philosophical milestones

Each move made in an inquiry creates its own philosophical products or results. These are milestones in the process of resolving a problem and indicate philosophical progress even when we have not reached a resolution. I use the term ‘milestone’ in this context in the project management sense rather than in the road-marker sense. Philosophical milestones indicate a significant stage has been reached in our inquiry towards the as-yet-unknown resolution, rather than marking the distance to a known destination. Box 14 presents a list of philosophical milestones sequenced according to the stages of inquiry.

Dewey calls these milestones, “temporary stopping places, landings of past thought that are also stations for departure for subsequent thought” (1933, ch5, §1). Buchler calls them instances of “philosophical motion” in inquiry (1993, 529), while Lipman (referring to William James) calls them “flights and perchings” (2003, 88). The different tasks of philosophy I discussed at the end of chapter 4 are examples of philosophical milestones, as are the various ways we can formulate and reformulate problems as questions, which I discussed at the end of chapter 5.

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53 As Gregory puts it, clarity and elaboration are contextual, and so we are concerned with whether something is sufficiently clear and elaborated in the context of our inquiry: “It is the content and movement of a particular dialogue that makes a particular term ambiguous, and that both reveals and constrains potential relevant meanings for it. To ask what the term should mean at this juncture of this dialogue (this new and tentative web of meanings) is more helpful than asking what it means in general” (2008, 28).

54 This list was originally formulated in a simple form in Golding (2002, 11) and is influenced by similar lists from Lipman (2003, 86), Lipman, et al., (1980, 111), Burgh, et al., (2006, 132), Splitter and Sharp (1995, 129), and Smith (2003). It has been developed by explicitly sequencing the products of philosophical inquiry according to the problem-resolution conception of philosophy and the stages of philosophical inquiry. Gregory (2007) has also done something similar.
### Box 14: Philosophical milestones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Apprehending the problem</strong></td>
<td>Wondered about a conception&lt;br&gt;Uncovered, experienced or noticed a philosophical problem in a conception&lt;br&gt;Decided the purpose for investigating this problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Problem framing</strong></td>
<td>Isolated, clarified and defined the problem&lt;br&gt;Expressed the problem as a philosophical question or questions&lt;br&gt;Organised a sequence of questions as the agenda for inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suggesting</strong></td>
<td>Offered suggestion, hypothesis, perspective, conjecture or explanation to help resolve the problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elaborating</strong></td>
<td>Interpreted, clarified and refined a suggestion&lt;br&gt;Broadened, expanded or built on a suggestion&lt;br&gt;Used analogy and metaphor to illuminate a suggestion&lt;br&gt;Gave example to illustrate the suggestion&lt;br&gt;Qualified or quantified the suggestion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reasoning &amp; analysing</strong></td>
<td>Made a meaningful distinction, connection, generalisation, classification, ordering or ranking&lt;br&gt;Discovered important relationships&lt;br&gt;Drew a reasonable implication, prediction or consequence from a suggested resolution&lt;br&gt;Uncovered assumptions and bias behind a suggested resolution&lt;br&gt;Offered an explanation to account for the suggested resolution&lt;br&gt;Defined and analysed concepts&lt;br&gt;Recognised consistency and inconsistency (interpersonally and intrapersonally)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Testing &amp; Evaluating</strong></td>
<td>Formulated and applied criteria to evaluate suggested resolution&lt;br&gt;Evaluated the accuracy and plausibility of assumptions and implications of a suggested resolution&lt;br&gt;Gave plausible reason, example or evidence to back up a suggested resolution&lt;br&gt;Gave plausible reason, example or evidence to test or challenge a suggested resolution&lt;br&gt;Detected fallacious reasoning, contradictions, vagueness and ambiguity&lt;br&gt;Evaluated the strength of support for and against a suggested resolution&lt;br&gt;Identified contextual features and how these change possible evaluations&lt;br&gt;Tested suggestion against observation, experience, the views of others, settled knowledge or action to judge if it resolves the problem and is defensible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resolving</strong></td>
<td>Concluded or made a considered judgement about which suggested resolution is best&lt;br&gt;Suspended judgement about a suggested resolution&lt;br&gt;Self-corrected and changed mind in light of evaluation&lt;br&gt;Rearranged, reordered or reframed knowledge and experience&lt;br&gt;Realised what we don’t know and the limits of our understanding&lt;br&gt;Identified new problems arising out of new perspectives and resolutions&lt;br&gt;Adopted or implemented a resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflecting</strong></td>
<td>Described the process of the inquiry and where we are in the inquiry&lt;br&gt;Evaluated what needs to be done next to follow the inquiry where it leads</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lipman also refers to philosophical milestones as “mediating judgements” to distinguish them from the “culminating judgement” of the resolution (2003, 279-281). For example, before we can reach the culminating judgement about whether killing is always wrong we have to make mediating judgements about what we mean by ‘killing’ and what reasons there are to think it right, and to think it is wrong. Each of these judgements is a philosophical milestone and an indicator of philosophical progress.

Even fruitless suggestions count as philosophical milestones and progress in the inquiry. Although many suggestions, distinctions and arguments will not lead to a resolution, and are ultimately rejected, they are milestones in the overall inquiry where we discover what does not resolve our problem.

One important benefit of using milestones as indicators of philosophical progress is that they are generally less controversial than resolutions. There may be a great deal of disagreement about whether we have resolved a problem, and even more disagreement about whether we have the best available resolution to the problem. Yet there is generally little disagreement about whether we have formulated a question; made a meaningful distinction or connection; clarified a philosophical position; uncovered assumptions and bias behind a position; given a plausible reason, example or evidence to back up or to challenge a position; or introduced doubt where there was previously indefensible certainty.

I present an example of how milestones indicate philosophical progress by further extending the illustration of the inquiry about racism from the previous two sections. These milestones are reached as the result of the moves made in the previous illustration. Even though the P4C students in the illustration have not yet resolved the problem they articulated with the question ‘What is racism?’ they have reached significant philosophical milestones and therefore they have made philosophical progress:

- A new question was asked: “What is racism?”
- Suggestions were offered about what racism is: “Racism is treating races differently.”
- Counter-examples were given to challenge this suggestion: “What about only auditioning Māori actors to play the role of the Māori school-teacher? We treat the races differently, but this can’t be racism” On the basis of this counter-example, students also rejected the original suggestion, which is another important milestone.
- The originally suggested resolution was refined: “Racism is unfairly treating races differently.”

IV. Questions to prompt the philosophical moves and milestones

The P4C teacher can prompt their students to make philosophical moves and produce philosophical milestones by asking thought-encouraging questions (which were introduced in chapter 2). As summarised in Box 15, each thought-encouraging question asks for the thinking move from a different stage of inquiry (unlike the philosophical questions discussed in chapter 5, which are for uncovering and addressing substantive philosophical problems). Thus the teacher judges which move would help the inquiry make progress, and then, to facilitate this progress and to model how students can make progress for themselves, they ask a thought-encouraging question that prompts this move. For example:

- If students should next elaborate, they ask “What do you mean?”
- If students next need to test and evaluate, they ask “How can we tell which view is best?”
- If more suggestions are needed, they ask “What are some other alternatives?”

The series of questions asked thus models the process of philosophical inquiry, and also encourages students to take steps along its path.

55 The list of prompt questions I present is developed in Golding (2005a, 2005b, 2006b). I explicitly sequence the thought-encouraging questions according to the stages of philosophical inquiry, and so make clear their role in facilitating philosophical progress. Gregory (2007) has also created a similar list. This list is also influenced by: Splitter and Sharp (1995, 56-57), Paul (1994, ch22; 1995), and Paul and Elder (2002) who typically organise questions by the type of thinking they prompt without fitting them strategically into a framework for inquiry.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 15: Prompt questions &amp; philosophical moves</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Apprehending the problem</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is interesting?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What do you see? Feel? Think?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What does this make you wonder about?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What is puzzling or doesn’t make sense?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Why does this matter? Why should we discuss this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... is interesting because ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I see... I feel ... I think ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wonder ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One puzzle is ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is important to discuss because ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Problem framing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What makes this problematic?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What questions does this raise?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How will we sequence our questions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is problematic because ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One question this raises is ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We need to answer ... first because ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suggesting</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How might we resolve the problem?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are some other alternatives?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do our suggestions address all the questions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One resolution might be ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maybe ... / How about ... / What if ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... deals with ... questions because ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elaborating</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How could we build on that suggestion?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is another way to say ...?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is an example or analogy for that?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you mean by ...?</td>
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<tr>
<td>How would you define ...?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Building on that you could say ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another way of saying that is ...</td>
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<tr>
<td>An example/analogy is ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... means ...</td>
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<tr>
<td>The definition of ... is ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reasoning &amp; analysing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is ... connected to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is ... distinct from?</td>
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<tr>
<td>If ... is true, what would this mean?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If ... is true, what must be assumed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What have we not considered?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why would someone think ...?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... is connected to ...</td>
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<tr>
<td>... is different from ...</td>
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<tr>
<td>That would mean ...</td>
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<tr>
<td>That assumes ...</td>
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<tr>
<td>We haven’t considered ...</td>
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<tr>
<td>Someone might think ... because...</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Testing &amp; evaluating</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are possible reasons for ...?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What are possible reasons against ...?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are examples and counter-examples?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can we test which resolution is best?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which criteria can we use to evaluate?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which suggested resolutions meet our criteria?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the suggested resolution resolve the problem?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this suggested resolution defensible?</td>
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<tr>
<td>A reason for ... is ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A reason against ... is ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An example/counter-example is ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We can test possible resolutions by ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The criteria we can use to judge are ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... meets/doesn’t meet the criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... resolves the problem because ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... is defensible because ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resolving</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What have we resolved?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is still not resolved?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What conclusion should we draw?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which resolution best resolves the problem?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What new problems arise?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How should we act in light of this new conception?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have resolved ... because ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have not resolved ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A conclusion we can draw is ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... best resolves the problem because...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New problems to consider are ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What we should now do is ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reflecting</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are we trying to do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are we making progress?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are we doing now?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does this help us?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do we do next to make progress?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are trying to ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are/aren’t progressing because ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now we are ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... helps us because ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now we should ...</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Thought-encouraging questions can also be used to promote distributed inquiry. For example, if someone offers a suggestion the P4C teacher could ask them “Why do you think …?” or they could invite distributed inquiry by asking others “What are some reasons to support the view that …?”

I present examples of how thought-encouraging questions can be used to prompt philosophical progress by further expanding the inquiry illustrated in the previous sections. The questions are asked to prompt the moves made and the milestones achieved in the previous illustrations:

- After reading a story that includes characters acting in a racist manner, the teacher knows that to begin the inquiry the students must identify problems and questions. They ask: “What questions does this raise?”
- Once the questions are formulated, (in this case, “What is racism?”) the next step is to suggest possible resolutions. The teacher prompts this stage by asking: “What suggestions are there about what racism is?”
- Once some suggestions are made, and have been elaborated, the teacher wants the students to go to the next stage of inquiry where they will challenge and test the suggestions. They ask: “Are there any counter-examples to the idea that racism is treating races differently?”
- When a challenge is suggested, the teacher judges that the next stage is to modify or refine the suggested resolution in the face of this challenge. To prompt this stage of inquiry, the teacher asks: “Can we modify the original suggestion to deal with the counter-example?”

Although I have emphasised how the P4C teacher asks thought-encouraging questions to guide philosophical inquiry, the teacher also encourages students to ask these questions and guide themselves. The aim is that students understand the framework for philosophical inquiry well enough to be able to take responsibility for asking thought-encouraging questions and facilitating their own progress.

V. Collective epistemic progress without consensus

What I have written about the inquiry framework so far might apply only to individuals making progress. However, in P4C, students form a Community of Inquiry (CI) who progress together as well as individually. So, in this sub-section I examine how the CI can make collective epistemic philosophical progress, or more colloquially, I examine what it means to say “we made progress.”

One possibility is that the CI could make progress by getting consensus about how to resolve the problems addressed. I call this getting final epistemic consensus. In fact it is often argued that unless a CI reaches final consensus, there will not be collective progress, only irreconcilable and incommensurable difference. However, I argue that final epistemic consensus is a poor standard for measuring collective epistemic progress in P4C for two main reasons:

1) Final epistemic consensus is not the aim of P4C (though it is not ruled out as a possible achievement). P4C encourages dialogue across difference (as discussed in chapter 2) where pluralism and multiple resolutions are valued and there is no attempt to impose consensus over the top of this real diversity. As Lipman puts it, the aim of P4C is for students to “think for themselves with others”, not for them to bring their thinking into “conformity” or agreement (2003, 96). Any measure of collective progress in P4C must show how there can be collective progress without final epistemic consensus.

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56 Which is similar to ‘that which would be accepted by all people in an ideal speech situation’ (Habermas, 1984), or ‘what the community will agree on in the long run’ (Peirce, 1912).
57 See Burbules & Rice, 1991, for a discussion and rejection of this argument.
58 Although some P4C theorists agree that final epistemic consensus is not the aim of philosophical inquiry (for example, Gregory, 2008, 11), some do not. For example, Kennedy argues, contrary to my position, that "in terms of community of inquiry, the direction in which the argument leads is, as I have already said, toward a complete coordination of perspectives. Epistemologically, this corresponds with Peirce’s definition of ‘truth’ as ‘what the community will agree on in the long run’" (2004, 757).
2) Final epistemic consensus is rarely achieved, if ever, so if this is the measure of collective progress, then we virtually never make collective progress. Thus I reject final epistemic consensus as a measure of collective progress for similar reasons to why I rejected idealistic conceptions of philosophical progress in chapter 4. Final epistemic consensus sets an impossibly and unnecessarily high standard for making collective progress, and should be rejected in favour of a realistic measure, based on the commonly achieved collective products of the CI that indicate progress (which I discuss later). Such a measure would allow us to judge collective progress regardless of whether we have reached a final conclusion or resolution. \(^{59}\)

To develop a conception of collective progress in P4C I thus have to resolve the problem of the seeming incompatibility of collective progress with epistemically disagreement about final conclusions. I will discuss four linked conceptions that resolve this problem. The CI as a whole can be said to make progress, despite disagreement between members, by 1) reaching mutual understanding; 2) engaging in one distributed process of inquiry and reaching; 3) inquiry milestones; and 4) procedural consensus.

1) The community makes progress by reaching common understanding

One kind of collective progress despite disagreement is progress by reaching mutual understanding. Burbules’ (1991, 1993) identifies this as a third possible result of dialogue apart from final epistemic consensus or incommensurable difference. This is also akin to Gadamer’s (1990) hermeneutical position that the aim of inquiry should be to foster mutual understanding. We make progress as a CI as we come to appreciate the views of the other participants, making these mutually intelligible, even if we disagree with them. We make progress in dialogue by translating the different perspectives and creating “a degree of understanding across (unresolved) differences” (Burbules & Rice, 1991, 409).

As Burbules (1993, 128) indicates, there are degrees of common understanding, ranging through: 1) little understanding of difference, but respect for different positions that one does not understand. 2) understanding that there are differences, without coming to a common understanding of these differences; and 3) common understanding of the differences. Each of these indicates collective epistemic progress to some degree.

The development of a shared understanding also allows for collective progress by inter-subjectivity. We can make collective progress by developing more and more inclusive perspectives that work for a wider group of participants (even if we cannot reach final all-inclusive consensus).

2) The community makes progress by advancing a distributed inquiry

The CI makes collective philosophical progress, even though individual members do not reach final epistemic consensus, because the community as a whole moves forward through the stages of philosophical inquiry. The members of the CI inquire together using shared cognition or distributed thinking (as discussed in chapter 2), where each person makes only some of the inquiry moves. This means that a CI involves a single distributed inquiry, and we can judge collective epistemic progress by judging progress in this inquiry. One student might provide a suggestion, then the community makes progress when another student clarifies this suggestion. Further progress is made when a different student provides a reason for, and another provides a reason against, accepting the suggestion (thus moving to the next stage of inquiry). When there is progress in this single distributed inquiry, it is accurate to say that we make progress in a CI.

The stages of inquiry, if agreed to as a common framework to guide collective inquiry, also make it more likely that there will be collective progress in a CI. Making collective epistemic progress through distributed inquiry requires individuals to stick to one common line of inquiry rather than going in multiple directions pursuing their own interests and ideas. The shared framework for inquiry makes this

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59 Another flawed interpretation of collective progress in P4C is that the CI as a whole could make progress by the collective reaching conscious resolutions or milestones. I reject this possibility because a CI is not aware and does not have the same sort of conscious mental states or conceptions that an individual might have.
possible. By referencing the stages of inquiry, all participants know where they are in the inquiry, what has been accomplished and what sort of moves should be made next in order to make further progress. In other words, the stages of inquiry can be used to orchestrate the moves from various members of the CI into one line of productive inquiry.  

3) The community makes progress by reaching milestones

As the result of the distributed inquiry, the CI also makes collective philosophical progress by reaching philosophical milestones, in four main ways:

*Overlapping consensus about milestones:* One way the CI makes progress is by reaching epistemic consensus about the milestones reached in the distributed inquiry (which is far easier to achieve than final epistemic consensus). A CI makes progress by gaining agreement, or finding points of similarity or overlapping consensus, about what has been achieved in the collective inquiry. We make progress as we agree that, for instance, such and such conceptions are the live options for resolving a problem, or that a particular argument provides the most important reason against a suggestion.

*Individual milestones as collective achievements:* The CI also makes progress whenever an individual member achieves a milestone such as asking a question, making a distinction, or suggesting a resolution. Every milestone reached by an individual in the CI is also a collective achievement, because reaching this milestone was the result of communal effort. In this respect, the distributed inquiry in a CI is like mountain climbing. Although in one sense it is individual mountaineers who conquer mountains, it is equally a team conquest as those who get to the top could only do so because others stay below at base camp and provide support. This explains what is meant when a P4C student says such things as “we made progress by making a connection between friendship and loyalty” while referring to something another student said. To use a different metaphor, the CI as a whole can be said to progress whenever one of the participants achieves a philosophical milestone, in the same way that Science makes progress through the achievements of individual scientists.

*Collection of milestones:* Because each milestone reached by an individual in a CI counts as collective progress, the CI also makes progress by adding to the collection of all the milestones reached by individuals. This is similar to how Science makes progress through the collected achievements of all scientists and this is what is referred to by such comments as, “we made progress by coming up with a range of views about friendship.”

This implication is that the collective progress of the CI goes beyond the progress of any one member because no one person grasps the total collection of milestones produced in the CI. The CI makes progress by creating an intellectual map made up of the milestones reached by each of the members of the community, including their problems, distinctions and possible positions. Each individual makes progress by developing their fragment of the map, which allows them limited intellectual navigation, but the CI as a whole makes greater progress because the collection of these fragments forms a bigger and more detailed map that allows for more extensive intellectual navigation.

This sort of collective progress is compatible with epistemic disagreement, just as Science makes progress despite disagreement amongst the legitimate findings of scientists. The CI makes progress by producing an intellectual map made up of the conceptions developed by all members, but there will be areas of the map that are not seamless, which include problematic areas where individuals disagree, and which become the stimulus for future progress.

*Distributed or tacit milestones:* More controversially, this view of collective progress implies that the collective progress of a CI goes beyond the collection of milestones reached by individual members and includes reaching what might be called distributed or tacit milestones which no member consciously holds. These milestones are tacitly implied by the collection of individually held conceptions, or a

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60 Often the P4C teacher might orchestrate the collective inquiry, but as the students become more expert they can take responsibility for orchestrating their own collective inquiry.
significant proportion of the members of the CI would agree to them, even though no member has yet articulated them. In other words, the milestones are distributed across the community without being possessed by any individual.\textsuperscript{61} Using the map metaphor again, the whole map is greater than the collection of individually held fragments, because, when the fragments are put together they indicate new, unimagined topographical details. When a member identifies what was previously a distributed or tacit milestone, they are justified in claiming this as progress by saying such things as, “We seem to be saying that …” However, much of the tacit progress of the CI may remain unarticulated.

4) The community makes progress by reaching consensus about epistemic procedures

Even if there is epistemic disagreement between individuals about their conclusions, the community also makes collective epistemic progress by reaching agreement about how to proceed in the inquiry in the face of this disagreement. This might be called consensus about epistemic procedures, or procedural consensus, to distinguish it from final epistemic consensus about our conclusions. We reach procedural consensus when we agree, for example, that it is epistemically best to pursue this course, to use this as a working definition, or that we next should ask this question.\textsuperscript{62}

Reaching procedural consensus is one way of making collective philosophical progress, but it is also an important pre-condition for other types of collective progress. For example, there could not be distributed inquiry without some agreement about how the collective inquiry should proceed.

Summary of collective epistemic progress without consensus

It might be assumed that either a CI reaches final epistemic consensus, or there is only incommensurable difference with no possibility of collective progress. This seems to force us to take an overly idealistic and potentially dominating position (that everyone should agree), or an overly pessimistic and potentially hopeless position (epistemic difference is incommensurable). Burbules and Rice (1991) offer a third option of reaching mutual understanding, but this is not yet enough to capture everything about what is meant when we say “we made progress” in a CI. In this section I have extended the options further. I have described several ways the CI can make progress without requiring final epistemic consensus. ‘We make progress’ could mean one or more of the following:

- We have come to a common understanding
- We are engaged in one inquiry together, and are moving forward through the stages of inquiry
- We agree on the milestones reached by members of the community
- Through collective effort members of the community have reached milestones
- We have accumulated a collection of milestones (some of which are tacit or distributed)
- We have reached agreement on what to do next to advance the inquiry.

Collective progress is possible in each of these ways, even when there is disagreement about what is the epistemically best resolution of the initial problem.

VI. The framework for philosophical inquiry & philosophical progress

Without guidance, P4C teachers and students are likely to be philosophically lost when faced with a philosophical problem. They know that they want to end up with a philosophical resolution, but do not know how to proceed. The framework for inquiry I present in this chapter enables students to make philosophical progress without getting lost.

\textsuperscript{61} See Hager (2008, 5) and Saloman & Perkins, (1998, 4) for a similar discussion of distributed knowledge.

\textsuperscript{62} Procedural consensus can also be understood in a political rather than an epistemic sense. This only requires agreement about what we will do and does not require agreement that this is, for example, the \textit{epistemically} best course, definition or question to ask.
The framework is a heuristic device to make philosophical inquiry manageable for novice philosophers. It also serves a propaedeutic function, enabling P4C students to master the sometimes logical, sometimes chaotic, and sometimes intuitive, process of philosophical inquiry. The stages of inquiry break the complex process of philosophical inquiry into simpler, sequenced stages. The moves describe what to do in each stage of inquiry, the milestones describe what is achieved or produced in each stage, and the thought-encouraging questions can be used to prompt students to make these moves and produce these milestones. P4C teachers and students can use this framework to isolate and sequence the thinking needed to resolve philosophical problems, to identify the distinct products that indicate philosophical progress, and to guide their inquiry so they are more likely to make progress.

Although following the stages of inquiry enables P4C students to make philosophical progress, and thus to learn how to make philosophical progress, this does not preclude making progress in spontaneous ways. The framework for inquiry, especially the list of milestones, enables P4C teachers and students to gauge this more unexpected, chaotic progress (thus dealing with one of the drawbacks of measuring progress by following the inquiry where it leads, as described in chapter 3). For example, while the community is evaluating possible resolutions, someone might make a comment that seems off track, but by referring to the stages of inquiry, this could be recognised to be a new question to pursue, a new resolution to consider, or even a resolution to a problem they were not currently discussing.

In the same way, by tracking the milestones produced, we can also judge progress in an inquiry that is advancing more by intellectual exploration than by attempting to resolve a particular problem. This sort of inquiry does not attempt to get anywhere, and may seem to wander aimlessly, but it can still make progress by achieving various milestones such as questions, positions, arguments, implications and distinctions, which describe the lie of the intellectual land.

Although this framework is developed from elements present in the P4C literature, it is a significant advance because it situates philosophical moves and milestones within the problem-resolution conception of philosophical progress. It is also a significant advance by being explicit about how a CI can make collective progress while individual members disagree. Most importantly it provides needed guidance for novice philosophers.
7. Personal epistemic positions & philosophical progress

Unfortunately, a taxonomy that divides all beliefs into either facts or opinions leaves out the most important category: reasoned judgement. Most important issues are not simply matters of fact, nor are they essentially matters of faith, taste, or preference. They call for our reasoned judgement (Paul, 1994, 343).

Philosophical progress is impeded when P4C students or teachers have conceptions of the whole endeavour of making epistemic progress that are not sophisticated enough for understanding philosophical inquiry and philosophical progress. To resolve this impediment, in this chapter I argue that the conception of philosophical progress for P4C developed so far needs to be supplemented with a conception of the sophisticated personal epistemic positions that need to be encouraged (and those to be avoided), as well as how these are to be encouraged.

The impediments to progress in P4C, illustrated in Box 4, can be attributed (at least partially) to underdeveloped personal epistemic positions. The first half of the illustrated discussion is philosophically unproductive because the students’ epistemic positions are inadequate for dealing with the complex and controversial nature of philosophy. In the face of a range of plausible philosophical views, where none seem to be simply ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, some students dogmatically assert their views come what may, and cannot understand why there is so much discussion when they should just be able to get the right answer and move on. Others take a relativist position and think that it is all a matter of opinion, and so they see no value in continuing the discussion once they have stated their opinion. The second half of the discussion, after student 7 suggests they would be better off reading the dictionary, is equally problematic because the teacher’s personal epistemic position is inadequate for the complexity of philosophy. In the first half of the discussion the teacher allowed students to say any opinion they liked: “there is no right and wrong answers in philosophy”. But in the second half they change tack and direct students to the line of inquiry that they think is ‘correct’. The discussion does get somewhere, but only because the teacher simplifies the issues into the ‘right answer’ and the ‘wrong answers’.

In this chapter, I describe the unsophisticated epistemic positions that are responsible for these difficulties, as well as the more sophisticated position necessary for avoiding them. This draws on empirical psychological findings about the epistemological beliefs and values held by individuals, and in particular, on the research of Perry (1970, 1981) and Kuhn (1999), as well as philosophers Daniel, et al., (2000, 2002, 2005, 2008) and Paul and Elder (1994, 1995, 2002). I argue that if P4C students take unsophisticated absolutist or relativist positions (as they commonly do), progress is impeded, as described above. But if they instead take a position of reasoned evaluationism, by which I mean that they see philosophical inquiry as dialogical reflective thinking with the aim of making reasonable judgements, then they will be able to make philosophical progress. I finish this chapter by considering how P4C might educate for reasoned evaluationism.

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63 This field of research is called “personal epistemology”. See Hofer & Pintrich (2002) for a good overview.
64 Unless specified, future references to these authors in this chapter will be to these books and articles.
I. Personal epistemic positions

What I mean by a personal ‘position’ in this context is an underlying conceptual structure for making meaning, or the framework through which we interpret our experiences. A position organises and colours what we experience, do and value and can be conceptualised in the way psychologists describe stages or structures, or the way philosophers describe philosophical positions. They can be conscious or articulated, or they may be more like what Frank Jackson (1998) calls implicit “folk beliefs”. They include abstract conceptual frameworks as well as patterns of attitudes, values and ways of reacting. As personal epistemic positions, they are “the assumptions and expectations a person holds at a given time in regard to the nature and origins of knowledge and value” (Perry, 1970, 42). Based on my broad description of epistemology, from chapter 1 section IV, epistemic positions organise and colour our conceptions of knowledge, understanding, conceiving, justification and judgement in all its modes. Most importantly in this context, an epistemic position is a conception of the whole enterprise of making epistemic progress, and thus the epistemic position taken by students “strongly influences” or “limits” (Perry, 1970, 92) their ability to understand and make philosophical progress.

Three personal epistemic positions that P4C students (and teachers) take

Perry, Daniel et al., Paul and Kuhn each describe three roughly similar epistemic positions, which I call absolutism, relativism and reasoned evaluationism. These are empirical descriptions based on studies of the positions that students actually take, rather than philosophical analyses of the positions that it is logically possible to take. This means that the description of absolutism and relativism throughout this chapter may seem logically inconsistent or unjustified, but this reflects the incongruity or inadequacy of the personal epistemic positions that students tend to adopt.

1. **Absolutism**: From the absolutist position, knowledge and values are objective, certain and absolute. The absolutist understands assertions as statements of fact and classifies all conceptions in absolutist categories such as right-wrong, true-false, correct-incorrect or good-bad.

2. **Relativism**: From the relativist position, our beliefs, theories and values are inherently and wholly relative, contingent and contextual, and there is no objective knowledge. The relativist understands assertions as expressions of preference and opinion and so classifies all conceptions as subjective or culturally relative opinions.

3. **Reasoned Evaluationism**: The reasoned evaluationist takes knowledge to be objective, as does an absolutist, while rejecting the certainty and absolutism associated with that position. They also retain the pluralism of relativism without drawing the relativist conclusion that ‘anything goes’.

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65 There are a number of alternatives to the term ‘position’: paradigm, stage, structure, stance, conception, perspective, frame of reference or understanding. I follow Perry (1970, 1981) in preferring the term ‘position’ to indicate a place or vantage point from which we view and interact with the world.

66 Although psychologists are concerned with the maturation of stages while philosophers are concerned with the rational justification of positions, I make an explicit connection here between psychological stages and philosophical positions (without claiming they are identical). Both are conceptions for making sense of the world which we modify and improve to deal with challenges. See especially the neo-Piagetian cognitive acceleration theorists such as Adey & Shayer (2002), whose descriptions of cognitive stages and how we move to higher stages is very similar to a description of philosophical positions and how we move to a better position. The main difference between psychological stages and philosophical positions may be how explicit or implicit they are and whether the process of changing them is conscious or not. Our psychological stages are likely to be implicit and the movement from one psychological stage to another may be largely unconscious. Philosophical positions, on the other hand, are likely to be explicit, and the move from one philosophical position to another may be largely a conscious response to explicitly articulated arguments against one’s position.

67 Other labels for this position include: “Dogmatic absolutism” (Paul & Elder, 2002, 10), “egocentric epistemology” (Daniel, 2008, 39), and “dualism” (Perry).

68 Alternative names include: “subjective relativism” (Paul & Elder, 2002, 10; Daniel, et al., 2002, 14), or “multiplism” (Kuhn).
The reasoned evaluationist understands assertions as more or less well-reasoned judgements and so classifies different conceptions as more or less warranted or defensible. When presented with alternative conceptions, the reasoned evaluationist applies reflective, critical and inter-subjective thinking to judge some to be erroneous and mistaken, and some to be better than others.  

Both Perry and Daniel document these epistemic positions being taken by students (liberal arts university students for Perry and younger children aged 10-12 for Daniel) in a developmental sequence starting with absolutism and moving to relativism before finally reaching reasoned evaluationism. Perry and Daniel also both argue that students move to more sophisticated epistemic positions in order to make sense of an experience of multiplicity: an experience of multiple plausible, contradictory answers and alternatives (as distinct from an experience of simple, clear-cut unambiguous answers). Paul’s view is similar (1994, 347-348): students take an absolutist or relativist epistemic position by default when they do not apprehend more sophisticated standards for dealing with multiplicity.

The epistemic positions and philosophical progress

My main argument for this chapter is that only reasoned evaluationism has the intellectual resources necessary for understanding and making philosophical progress in P4C (as this is understood from previous chapters). Absolutists and relativists can employ the categories of ‘right answer’, ‘wrong answer’ and ‘mere opinion’, but these are insufficient for making sense of philosophical progress, or for resolving philosophical problems. What is required instead is the category of ‘reasoned judgement’, which is only employed by reasoned evaluationists, where conceptions are judged better or worse depending on the quality of reasoning supporting them.

Let me also be clear about my use of the terms ‘absolutism’ and ‘relativism’ and how they function in my argument. When I use these terms in this chapter, I refer only to the unsophisticated, muddled personal positions that students do in fact take, and their consequences for P4C, and I do not refer to other philosophical positions that have been given similar labels. Even though these terms could be described as oversimplified and crude from a professional philosopher’s point of view, nevertheless they are not ‘Straw Men’. I am arguing that P4C teachers and students do take these muddled and unsophisticated positions, and when they do, this impedes philosophical progress in P4C. I am not arguing that more sophisticated epistemic positions are impossible or that they would be incompatible with P4C. In fact, I am counting on more sophisticated epistemic positions being available, and that these can support philosophical progress where crude absolutism and relativism impede it.

Based on this, I acknowledge that sophisticated and defensible versions of absolutism (such as Neo-Platonist or Hegelian positions) or relativism (such as a Neo-Pragmatist or Rortian positions) might also support philosophical progress in P4C. However, this does not affect my argument in this chapter: the unsophisticated absolutist and relativist positions that P4C teachers and students tend to take should be rejected for P4C in favour of reasoned evaluationism, which stands for a range of positions that might include sophisticated absolutist and relativist elements. I say more about this in section IV.

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69 Other labels include: “Committed relativism” or “critical pluralism” (Perry), “evaluative position” (Kuhn), “objective” or “informed relativism” (Daniel, et al., 2002), and “intersubjectivity” (Daniel, 2008).

70 I do not claim that these positions are part of a necessary developmental process. I also acknowledge that these positions are contextual in the sense that one person could, for example, take the epistemic position of relativism in relation to philosophy, absolutism for mathematics and reasoned evaluationism for history (or even different epistemic positions for different sub-disciplines).

71 An experience of multiplicity could involve: Complexity, vagueness, ambiguity, contingency, contextualism; uncertainty, doubt and the unknown; debate, difference of opinion and disagreement among authorities; diversity and plurality; indeterminacy of evidence and reasons; no straightforward criteria for judging right or wrong and correct or incorrect; and, having good reasons for saying something is true and for saying it is false.

72 For example, the positions seem to run together the logically distinct issues of whether we can have truth or knowledge, how we find these, how we should evaluate claims to truth or knowledge, and what attitude we should take to disagreement.
In the next three sections I will summarise the features of the three personal epistemic positions (see Box 16), and discuss some variations. I will also identify some major implications these positions have for philosophical progress in P4C, showing how absolutism and relativism impede philosophical progress while reasoned evaluationism is a necessary precondition for it.

**Box 16: Table of the features of three main personal epistemic positions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal epistemic position</th>
<th>(Crude) Absolutism</th>
<th>(Crude) Relativism</th>
<th>Reasoned evaluationism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Epistemic aim</strong></td>
<td>Certainty, absolute truth</td>
<td>Personal opinion</td>
<td>Better conceptions &amp; reasoned judgements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nature of knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Absolute, universal, final, objective and out there waiting to be discovered</td>
<td>There is no objective knowledge, only subjective opinions</td>
<td>Fallible, plural and developing. The result of reasoned evaluation that balances objective standards and subjective elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assertions</strong></td>
<td>Statements of fact that are correct or incorrect in their representation of reality</td>
<td>Expressions of opinion that are accountable only to their owners</td>
<td>Judgements that can be evaluated and compared according to criteria of argument and evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conceptions of learning</strong></td>
<td>We find knowledge or are ‘given it’ from an epistemic authority such as an expert, teacher, or textbook</td>
<td>Radical constructivism where we can create whatever we like</td>
<td>We construct knowledge or meaning within the objective constraints of the world, logic and intersubjective perspectives and standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Valued educational outcomes</strong></td>
<td>Correct answers</td>
<td>Expressions of opinion</td>
<td>Reasoned judgements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Epistemic progress</strong></td>
<td>By getting the right answers or truth</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>By developing epistemically better conceptions (where there is always room for further improvement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Difficulty for Philosophical progress</strong></td>
<td>Dogmatic entrenchment, over-simplification, opportunism, dependence on epistemic authority, and unreflective belief</td>
<td>Detachment, opportunism, nihilism, apathy, paralysis, escape from commitment or engagement, and unreflective belief</td>
<td>Complexity which requires work to ‘untangle’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. Absolutism

A crude absolutist sees the world in terms of correct and incorrect conceptions, which are found by consulting an expert or using an authoritative method. They “believe that there is only a single way of looking at the world - that which they were taught and which they must master” (Daniel, et al., 2002, 4). Although in principle a crude absolutist categorises all knowledge claims as ‘true’ or ‘false’, in practice they acknowledge that there are sometimes isolated special cases of multiplicity, controversy and disagreement that cannot yet be categorised:

1. **Temporary period of data gathering**: An absolutist might acknowledge some multiplicity when data has yet to be gathered. In this case the absolutist response would be that we should temporarily suspend judgement until all the facts are in.

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73 This row is from Kuhn (1999, 23).
2. **Illegitimate mistake:** An absolutist might also acknowledge temporary multiplicity and disagreement when someone has yet to realise they are wrong, confused or mistaken. In this case, the absolutist response is that we should consult the facts and the experts so we can prove one view correct and reject the incorrect view.

3. **Opinion:** An absolutist might also allow for multiplicity about special issues which are matters of taste not knowledge, and where everyone is entitled to their own opinion. This leads to a version of absolutism where in some situations there are either right and wrong answers, and others are a matter of opinion. Under this version, an absolutist usually sees the world from the absolutist position, but in some circumstances, perhaps in relation to ethics, religion or politics, they take a relativist position (with all the associated difficulties).

**The difficulties absolutism poses for philosophical progress in P4C**

When P4C students take a crude absolutist epistemic position, this impedes philosophical progress because, as discovered by Perry and Daniel, they lack the sophisticated standards needed to address and resolve philosophical problems. The ambiguity, subtle distinctions, multiple answers and complexity that are central to productive philosophical inquiry are thought to be pointless by the unsophisticated absolutist, because they can only conceptualise in terms of the crude standards of right and wrong. “Just tell us the answer!” is their demand, but P4C cannot provide the certain or decisive conclusions they seek. The result is that absolutist students easily get bored with P4C dialogue because they “have an impression of ‘getting nowhere’ with their ideas” (Daniel, et al., 2002, 7). If they remain absolutists, they give up on the possibility of philosophical progress because philosophy does not produce the outcomes or products they require or can understand.

One of the greatest potential difficulties P4C faces is if absolutist students retreat to, and become entrenched in, a closed-minded, black and white dogmatism and refuse to engage in dialogue or acknowledge any legitimate perspective except their own. This is the most extreme absolutist position that Perry observed, where students see the world in terms of their view (the right view) and every other view (the wrong views). When there is controversy or disagreement, they dogmatically align or adhere with the authorities (us vs. them) or oppose authorities (I’m right and they’re wrong). Entrenched absolutists claim: “It just is true,” or “I don’t care what you say, this is the right answer.” They give up trying to justify their judgements and ignore any complexity that might challenge their point of view. When students take this position, there can be no philosophical progress because they refuse to move.

**III. Relativism**

Perry observed that when students find they are unable to classify every idea according to absolutist standards, they tend to become crude relativists and hold that there is no such thing as ‘right’ and ‘wrong’. They replace ‘true’ with ‘true-for-me’, which functions merely as a synonym for ‘my opinion’. This leads them to the position that all opinions are equally viable, everyone has a right to their own opinions, and thus every philosophical view is epistemically equal to every other.

When P4C students take a relativist epistemic position they value expressing their personal views and hearing those of others, commonly saying such things as: “It was good to have our own say”. However, the emphasis is merely on sharing opinions without critically evaluating them. When different students express contrary views with seemingly good reasons to back them up, a relativist student might say: “Whatever answer you give is right for you,” or “It all depends.” When there is disagreement, relativists do not evaluate the views to judge if one is epistemically better than another, instead they tend to react in one of the three following ways (which might be seen as varieties of crude relativism):

1. **Bland tolerance:** Because it is all a matter of opinion, relativist students sometimes take the position that all views are equally good and so we should respect and tolerate them all. Under this position, it is wrong to criticise the views of others as they are as good as our own.
2. Indifference and apathy: A second relativist position that students sometimes take is what Sprod (2001, 177) calls “indifference”. Under this position, moral and epistemic reasons and reasoning are considered irrelevant and are ignored. Indifference can also blend into the apathetic position that there is no point in discussing anything.

3. Epistemic and moral nihilism: At its most extreme, the apathetic view can become nihilism. If it is all a matter of opinion, then all views are equally unjustified and worthless and students take a position of universal scorn and cynicism.

The difficulties relativism poses for philosophical progress in P4C

Relativism impedes philosophical progress in P4C because, from a crude relativist perspective, there is no point in trying to resolve philosophical problems: we cannot get it right even if we try, and one resolution is as good as any other, because we can’t get it wrong. Eckersley calls the inclination to take such a position in the face of disagreement, diversity and complexity, a “postmodern tendency” (2004, 47). He argues that it is appealing because it relieves “us of the effort to try to make sense of a world that no longer seems to make sense” (2004, 211). When the absolutist standards of right and wrong are inadequate to help students resolve complex philosophical issues, rather than develop more complex standards it is easier for them to give up and escape to relativism and the “deceptive security of retreating behind [their] own uncritical opinions” (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 135).

Crude relativism therefore leads to the over-valuing of unreflective opinions and the under-valuing of critical judgements. All views are equally bad or equally good so the relativist is free to believe whatever they like without inquiry, critique or evaluation. Given that making critical, reasoned judgements is essential for making philosophical progress, this is a problematic position for P4C.

The difficulties both absolutism and relativism pose for philosophical progress in P4C

If students adopt an absolutist or relativist position, they see no point in the Community of Inquiry (CI), even though this is central to making philosophical progress in P4C (as described in chapter 2). Both absolutism and relativism encourage monologue where students express their views “without being influenced by the divergent points of view expressed by peers” (Daniel, 2008, 39). If they are absolutists there is no need for them to listen to the views of other students who do not have the authority to assert that a view is right or wrong. They want the right answer as ‘certified’ by an epistemic authority. If they are relativists then all views have equal epistemic standing and there is no need to take into consideration what anyone else thinks. In both cases, philosophical progress in P4C is impeded because students see no point in engaging in critical inquiry about philosophical problems. Rather than making philosophical progress, they are left as easy victims to uncritical acceptance of prejudice, preconception or ideology. Kuhn puts this same point in a different but illuminating way:

If knowledge is entirely objective, certain and simply accumulates, unconnected to the human minds that do this knowing – as the absolutist conceives – or if knowledge is entirely subjective, subject only to the tastes and wishes of the knower – as the [relativist] conceives – critical thinking and judgement are superfluous. People must see the point of thinking if they are to engage in it (Kuhn, 1999, 23).

Students taking an absolutist or relativist position can also pose a more subtle difficulty for philosophical progress in P4C by opportunistically participating in the CI without real engagement or commitment. If their teacher asks them to give a reasoned judgement they may give reasons, even though, as absolutists or relativists, they do not think there is any epistemic value in this. They manifest the outward forms of philosophical inquiry, but they are just going through the motions to please the teacher. Thus absolutism and relativism can impede philosophical progress if students participate in philosophical dialogue merely as a diversion that has no meaning or relevance for their lives. They will not engage with the actual problems and so they will not be able to make progress resolving them. As I argued in chapter 4, any resolutions suggested will be mere words for them.
The underlying reason why crude absolutism and relativism pose such difficulties for philosophical progress in P4C is that they lack the epistemic resources necessary for understanding and making philosophical progress. Resolving a philosophical problem is an inherently controversial process and requires making and evaluating nuanced, reasoned judgements about the epistemic warrant of different possible resolutions, which neither unsophisticated absolutism nor relativism can support. Philosophical problems cannot be given straightforward ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ resolutions (as argued in chapter 4), so the black-and-white standards of unsophisticated absolutism are inadequate. Unsophisticated relativism is also inadequate as it holds that all philosophical views have the same epistemic status and therefore it does not have the resources to critically judge that one conception is epistemically better than other. When students take either an absolutist or relativist position they do violence to the possibility of philosophical progress, often without even realising it.

For the same reasons, absolutists or relativists cannot acknowledge the philosophical milestones discussed in chapter 6 as progress. For an unsophisticated absolutist we either have the resolution or we do not. Similarly, a relativist can only understand milestones as epistemically equivalent opinions, and not as progress. To acknowledge milestones as indicators of progress we have to move beyond crude absolutism or relativism to reasoned evaluationism.

Additionally, idealistic and pessimistic conceptions of philosophical progress (originally discussed and rejected in chapter 4) tend to lead to crude absolutism and relativism (respectively), and the subsequent impediments to progress, so this is a further reason to reject idealistic and pessimistic conceptions for P4C. If philosophical progress in P4C is understood in idealistic terms as moving towards the truth, then P4C students tend to take an absolutist position. Likewise if philosophical progress is understood in pessimistic terms, where there are no truths and no progress in philosophy, then students tend to end up as relativists. So, idealistic and pessimistic conceptions of philosophical progress should be rejected for P4C, because in both cases they tend to indirectly and unjustifiably impede progress.

IV. Reasoned evaluationism

In this section I argue that reasoned evaluationism is a necessary precondition for philosophical progress in P4C. Only this position has the epistemic resources to avoid the impediments posed by unsophisticated absolutism and relativism, and to support philosophical progress in P4C.

Reasoned evaluationism provides a position from which students can resolve philosophical problems by judging that some conceptions are more well-reasoned, defensible or warranted because they better account for, are congruous with, or are in greater equilibrium with, our rational considerations. As discussed above, the standards of relativism and absolutism are inadequate for making such judgements. The critical and dialogical inquiry necessary for making philosophical progress in P4C is encouraged by reasoned evaluationism. The reasoned evaluationist (unlike the crude absolutist or relativist) has to critically evaluate the conceptions they encounter and judge which are better, because they cannot fall back on an external epistemic authority to tell them which view is right, nor can they treat all views as epistemically equivalent opinions. The reasoned evaluationist therefore engages in critical dialogical inquiry to make and judge philosophical progress.

Also, reasoned evaluationism legitimately acknowledges the subjective and objective components of resolving a philosophical problem. This makes reasoned evaluationism more balanced than absolutism, which sees knowledge solely in terms of objective discovery, and relativism, which “overpowers and obliterates any objective standard” and only acknowledges the subjective construction of knowledge (Kuhn, 1999, 22-23).

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74 This expands on chapter 3’s conception of progress by discovering and creating meaning, and chapter 4’s conception of resolving philosophical problems by adjusting or adapting our conceptions to extra-mental rational considerations.
If P4C students and teachers take the position of reasoned evaluationism, they will avoid the impediments to progress associated with absolutism or relativism. However, this will not mean that making philosophical progress is a simple matter. Reasoned evaluationists have to think through the complexity of philosophical problems, and this is difficult work.

**Reasoned evaluationism and sophisticated absolutism and relativism**

Although I argue that absolutism and relativism should be rejected for P4C in favour of reasoned evaluationism, I only reject the unsophisticated versions that P4C students and teachers tend to take. I now want to re-examine some sophisticated absolutist and relativist positions (different from those which impede philosophical progress) and show that these can be classified as types of reasoned evaluationism, and that they might support philosophical progress in P4C. This mirrors my position in chapter 4 where I rejected simple versions of idealistic and pessimistic conceptions of philosophical progress in favour of realistic conceptions, but argued that more sophisticated versions might be acceptable because they were surreptitiously realistic conceptions.

I will use the sophisticated absolutist position that Susan Gardner advocates for P4C as an example.75

A Community of Inquiry is neither teacher-centred and controlled nor student-centred and controlled, but centred on and controlled by the demands of truth. Truth is absolutely essential to this method; it is only because of progress toward truth that participants are ultimately convinced of the fruitfulness of the process… If a Community of Inquiry is to be worthy of its name, it must make some progress toward “the truth” (1995, 38)

Gardner (1995, 1997, 1998) has championed the conception of P4C inquiry as truth-seeking in order to combat the tendency of P4C to be a “mere conversation”. She seems to be arguing that P4C should be truth-directed in order to avoid the problems that result when teachers and students take an unsophisticated relativist position about P4C (although she does not explicitly make this claim).

I argue that despite using the term ‘truth’, which seems to imply an absolutist position, Gardner’s position is different from unsophisticated absolutism and is instead a type of reasoned evaluationism. What Gardner means by truth is more like what I mean by an inter-subjective critical judgement than final Settled Truth. She says: “To say of something that it is true is not to say anything more than that it has undergone and survived a process”, and the process she describes is that of making reasoned judgements not of finding truth ready-made (Gardner, 1998, 85), nor of finding “truths that stand the test of time and all further battering by relevant evidence” (Gardner, 1997, 103). Given this understanding of philosophical ‘truth’, her position might be re-phrased, in line with my argument in this chapter, as saying that P4C inquiry requires an epistemic foundation of reasoned evaluationism.

Gardner (1997, 102) also argues that truth motivates inquiry or is “the prime mover” and that truth-seeking is what distinguishes the philosopher from the sophist or the merely clever, skilled thinker using rhetoric and persuasiveness to win an argument. Yet we can also replace ‘truth’ with ‘better conception’ or ‘progress,’ in the sense that reasoned evaluationism understands them, and retain the same sort of motivation for inquiry and the same distinction between the sophist and the philosopher. Philosophers seek to develop better conceptions and to make progress and this is what motivates critical philosophical inquiry. For these reasons, sophisticated absolutist positions such as Gardner’s are, in practice, varieties of reasoned evaluationism.

As a further example, imagine a sophisticated absolutist, who is also a fallibilist and so open to the possibility that even their most fundamental beliefs may turn out to be false, and thus ready to relinquish them if confronted by a justified critique. Although they aim for ‘truth’ they acknowledge that they cannot tell for sure whether they have the truth, and do not classify conceptions as simply true or false. Instead, they rely on the same sort of criteria that reasoned evaluationists might use to judge

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75 Though I do not claim that this is the best version of a sophisticated absolutist position. I use this as an example simply because it is a position taken in the P4C literature.
whether one conception is better than another: Is it more congruent and adequate, or more in reflective equilibrium when compared with other conceptions? The only real difference between such a sophisticated absolutism and reasoned evaluationism is the theoretical commitment to eventually reaching some final truth. But if a sophisticated absolutist also thought there could only be a fallible and tentative truth, or that we could never prove we have the final truth, then they are a reasoned evaluationist in all but name.

Something similar could be said about sophisticated forms of relativism that reject absolute and universal standards, and hold that all judgements have to be made ‘relative’ to some partial or contingent standard or criteria. If the relativist also goes beyond the unsophisticated position that ‘it’s all a matter of opinion’ and employs partial standards for judging that one conception is better than another, such as congruence with other conceptions, then they are accepting a type of reasoned evaluationism (which Daniel, et al., calls “objective relativism” for this reason).

Yet the terminological differences between these types of reasoned evaluationism have important pedagogical implications. When we use the word ‘truth’, students and teachers are likely to hear the unsophisticated absolutist version of ‘truth’ rather than the complex sense of truth advocated by sophisticated absolutists. If students are encouraged to seek the ‘true answer’ in P4C, they tend to seek the answer that is backed up by the ‘facts’, or more often the authority of the teacher or the text-book. Thus the term ‘reasoned judgement’ may be preferable to ‘truth’ in P4C, as it is less likely to lead to the difficulties of unsophisticated absolutism. The same can be said about sophisticated relativism. Claiming that “there are no right and wrong answers in philosophy” is likely to be interpreted as an endorsement of the unsophisticated relativist position that everything is a mere opinion, rather than an endorsement of a sophisticated epistemic position that can support philosophical progress.

V. Educating for reasoned evaluationism

In the previous sections I argued that it is necessary to approach philosophical progress in P4C from the position of reasoned evaluationism so as to avoid the impediments to progress from relativism and absolutism. The implication of this is that because P4C students are likely to begin as absolutists or relativists, P4C must also educate for reasoned evaluationism.\footnote{It is possible that some students might already take the position of reasoned evaluationism when they start P4C, but Perry and Daniel’s studies show this to be very unlikely. Also, even if there are a few precocious students, education for reasoned evaluationism will still be important for the majority of students.} In this section I will outline some suggestions about how this might be done.

To reach the position of reasoned evaluationism, students have to first realise that it does not make sense to think that one perspective is right and others wrong, or that all perspectives are epistemically equal. Then they can move to the position that some perspectives are better than others depending on how well reasoned they are.

Perry argues that reasoned evaluationism can develop spontaneously in response to multiplicity. This would imply that we could educate for reasoned evaluationism merely by confronting students with philosophical pluralism, disagreement and complexity in the dialogical inquiry of P4C.

However, Perry also argues that confrontation with multiplicity may not automatically result in a move to reasoned evaluationism. Some students get “stuck” or “entrenched” in a dogmatic position or “escape” to a relativist position. Daniel’s (2002, 16) findings are similar, showing that without teacher guidance, younger children never spontaneously reach the position of reasoned evaluationism. The implication is that explicit guidance will be required to educate for reasoned evaluationism in P4C.\footnote{I say more about the nature of teacher guidance in chapter 8.}

Students do not spontaneously move to reasoned evaluationism, and instead require explicit guidance, because epistemic positions tend to be extremely robust and difficult to abandon (Gardner, 1989, 5-6).
Everything a person experiences and learns is ‘coloured’ by the position they take. As a consequence, students are likely to interpret the multiple defensible perspectives they encounter in P4C (and the current pedagogy of P4C described in chapter 1 and 2), from within their absolutist or relativist positions. It is far easier for students to reject the multiple perspectives, to compartmentalise them or to assimilate them under their current position, than it is for them to transform their crude epistemic positions to the more sophisticated reasoned evaluationism.

**Rejection:** Students can easily disregard the experience of multiple perspectives as illegitimate or unreal in some way. For example, dogmatist students will reject challenging views as false or mistaken. They reject the divergent perspectives raised in P4C as being ‘wrong’ while their own perspective is ‘right’. Alternatively, from a relativist position, the disagreement between perspectives might be rejected as illusory because it is really only people stating their personal preferences and tastes.

**Compartmentalisation:** Students also tend to keep incompatible perspectives compartmentalised from each other so they do not even realise that there are multiple conflicting perspectives. For example, see Howard Gardner’s account of how students can give the correct answer to theoretical physics questions in the classroom (or exam room), but then rely on their very different and highly inaccurate and superficial physical theories and conceptions they developed when young – their unschooled mind – for day-to-day problem solving (1989, 5). In many cases, the challenging perspectives students are confronted with in P4C are held separate from their pre-existing beliefs, so students fail to experience the multiplicity that could stimulate them to move to reasoned evaluationism.

**Assimilation:** Alternatively, students can interpret multiple perspectives from within the structures of their current position. Because absolutist students just want the right answers, from their point of view the multiplicity and lack of final answers in P4C will seem like a cover-up for bad teaching. They tend to think that the P4C teacher is inept, confused and cannot clearly articulate the truth, or that they are ignorant and do not know the truth. A relativist student will likely interpret the emphasis on multiple perspectives as being an elaborate way to say that everyone can have their own opinion. From this perspective a teacher’s refusal to identify the ‘right’ answer is taken to mean that answers are unimportant, and any answer is as good as another (Sprod, 2001, 178-180). Encouragement to participate, answer questions, and give reasons is merely interpreted as an opportunity for every student to share their opinion and get to know what others think.

**Accommodation:** In order to move to reasoned evaluationism, students must circumvent the rejection, compartmentalisation or assimilation of multiplicity and must instead accommodate it. Rather than interpreting the multiplicity from their existing position, they must transform them so they can now make sense of otherwise discrepant multiple defensible perspectives. This is the equivalent of resolving the epistemological philosophical problems in their crude epistemic positions.

Because of the tendency towards rejection, compartmentalisation and assimilation, and the difficulty of accommodation, if students are to move from an absolutist or relativist position to reasoned evaluationism, they will need explicit teaching and guidance. The following three approaches to educating for reasoned evaluationism are therefore important additions to the pedagogy of P4C. Each approach makes it more likely that P4C students will accommodate the multiplicity they face and develop reasoned evaluationism. To educate for reasoned evaluationism, the P4C teacher should:

1) Avoid simplistic ways of talking about multiple perspectives that may encourage crude absolutism or relativism, such as presenting a view as the correct view of the matter or merely one opinion among many. Too much emphasis on “there are no right and wrong answers” will move students towards relativism. However, too much emphasis on “but of course some views are proven true” will move students towards absolutism. Instead, the P4C teacher should stress that there are better and worse resolutions to philosophical problems and make explicit the process of reasoning and weighing up the perspectives.

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78 This is one important aspect of educating for philosophical progress. I further discuss how to educate for philosophical progress in chapter 8.
complex evidence to come to a resolution. In particular, they should model how they develop a reasonable judgement that balances all the relevant considerations, and ask students to do the same.

2) Encourage their students to uncover and experience philosophical problems in their crude personal epistemic positions, and then support them to resolve these problems. The P4C teacher should first encourage their students to notice philosophical problems where their crude epistemic positions are incongruous with, or inadequate to account for, their experience of multiple defensible perspectives. In particular P4C teachers can help absolutists to uncover philosophical problems in their epistemic position by highlighting disagreement between equally defensible views, and they can help relativists uncover philosophical problems in their epistemic position by highlighting how we can legitimately judge that one view is better than another in the face of disagreement and pluralism. The P4C teacher should then encourage their students to address and resolve these problems through philosophical inquiry about their conceptions of truth, knowledge and meaning. It is only through such a process of problematising and resolution that students can accommodate the multiplicity they experience in P4C and develop the position of reasoned evaluationism.

3) Already occupy a position of reasoned evaluationism. This is an important requirement for educating for reasoned evaluationism, because P4C teachers are likely to tacitly encourage their students to emulate their epistemic position, with the absolutist teacher fostering absolutist students and the relativist teacher fostering relativist students (Daniel, 2008, 45-46).

An unsophisticated absolutist teacher will tend to see their job as leading students to the truth. As such, they are inclined towards the teacher directed discussions outlined in chapter 2, where the questions they ask and the tasks they assign will be more or less subtle ways of controlling and directing their students to the ‘right’ outcomes. They will think there are truths to be found that students need to know, and thus will be likely to lead their students to these truths rather than encouraging independent critical judgement. Faced with this, P4C students are likely to end up as crude absolutists.

An unsophisticated relativist teacher, at the other extreme, will tend to allow their students to say whatever they like without restriction. They are inclined towards the unstructured discussions outlined in chapter 2 where the only aim is to make sure everyone has a say. The relativist teacher may ask students to give reasons and even to agree and disagree, but this will merely appear similar to critical evaluation, and will actually be just another way of expressing opinions. The relativist teacher will leave students free to have whatever opinion, reason or justification they like and they will not require them to critically evaluate or judge which are better. Faced with this, students will likely end up as unsophisticated relativists.

The reasoned evaluationist teacher will tend to encourage reasoned evaluationism in their students. They encourage a CI, as described in chapter 2, where students engage in dialogical critical inquiry, and judge that some views are epistemically better than others without appeal to absolute standards of truth and falsity. Although operating in this way will not guarantee that students will become reasoned evaluationists, it is a necessary condition.

Furthermore, unless a P4C teacher occupies the position of reasoned evaluationism, they will not recognise if their students are reasoned evaluationists, they will be unable to scaffold them to reach this position, and will likely deter them instead. When P4C students are reasoned evaluationists, they deliberately seek multiple perspectives, give reasons to support and challenge these and then weigh up the reasons to decide which perspective is best. But if their P4C teacher were an absolutist or relativist they would misinterpret and discourage this behaviour, thus discouraging reasoned evaluationism. An absolutist teacher seeing students inquiring from the position of reasoned evaluationism would think

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79 This implies that the teacher education involved in P4C must also address how to transform the epistemic conceptions of prospective P4C teachers. While this is an important issue, it is beyond the scope of this thesis.

80 I discuss the sort of leading approach a crude absolutist teacher might take, and the laissez-faire approach of a crude relativist teacher, in more depth in chapter 8.
that they are getting confused and need more direction to get to the right answer. A relativist teacher would just see students swapping opinions of equal epistemic status. In both cases the teacher cannot apprehend that their students are making philosophical progress by replacing incongruous and inadequate conceptions with better conceptions, and they discourage the critical dialogue that could lead to philosophical progress. The absolutist teacher merely asks for students to assent to the truth as they see it while the relativist teacher merely asks for students to share their views. Only a reasoned evaluationist teacher would recognise and encourage philosophical progress.

VI. Personal epistemic positions and philosophical progress

This chapter argued that a conception of philosophical progress for P4C must include an endorsement of the personal epistemic position of reasoned evaluationism. This position provides the epistemic foundation needed for understanding and employing the problem-resolution conception of philosophy, the conception of philosophical questions as the tools to articulate philosophical problems, and the heuristic framework for inquiry.

Taking personal epistemic positions that are unsuitable for making philosophical progress is at the heart of many of the impediments to philosophical progress that P4C faces. For example, if students see philosophical resolutions in black and white absolutist terms this can lead to dogmatism, oversimplification of complex issues and over-reliance on external authority and facts. Alternatively if students see resolutions in relativist terms where they all have equal epistemic status as opinions, this may lead to detachment, apathy, and abandonment of critical engagement. From these positions neither P4C students nor teachers can recognise or guide philosophical progress in P4C.

Instead, to make philosophical progress, students need to take a position of reasoned evaluationism and judge philosophical milestones and resolutions as more or less well-reasoned or warranted based on the quality of inter-subjective critical evaluation supporting them. It is only from this position that they can understand and engage in the critical and dialogical inquiry needed for making philosophical progress.

However, there is no guarantee that by participating in P4C, as the pedagogy is currently conceived, that students will move to reasoned evaluationism rather than escape to relativism or become entrenched in dogmatism. Given the controversial nature of philosophy, P4C students will be confronted by many seemingly defensible conceptions that will challenge their simple epistemic positions. But they tend to reject, compartmentalise or assimilate these challenging experiences into their relativist or absolutist position. If the P4C teacher also takes a relativist or absolutist position, then they will make it even harder for students to reach reasoned evaluationism.

Based on the difficulty of moving to reasoned evaluationism, I also conclude that a conception of philosophical progress in P4C must include new pedagogy for educating for reasoned evaluationism. The pedagogy of P4C must not only encourage the development of skills and community, but also the development of the sophisticated personal epistemic position of reasoned evaluationism.

Despite presenting a clear conception of what reasoned evaluationism is and how to educate for it, there is still a potential impediment to progress, because P4C teachers can easily and unintentionally take pedagogical actions that encourage absolutism or relativism. A theoretical understanding is one thing, but sticking to this in practice is another. In the next chapter I address the practical stance that P4C teachers can take which will make it easier for them to maintain reasoned evaluationism without slipping into practices that will encourage absolutist and relativist tendencies in their students.
8. The P4C teacher as philosophical guide

But how does one teach in the situation where questions do not have correct answers, where difficulty is intrinsic, where the learner is, in the deeper sense of the word, lost? Leading learners does not help them learn how to go on: It may solve the immediate problem of moving them to a particular outcome, but does not by itself provide them with the ability, or the confidence, to find the way on their own. Teachers can do more for learners, not by giving them maps, but by helping them to learn how to create maps, to draw lines and make connections themselves (Burbules, 2000a, 184).

We must bear in mind that instruction in philosophy is not concerned with heaping solution on solution, nor indeed with establishing results, but solely with learning the methods 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 follow 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 might be able to venture forth alone, self-guidance having replaced the teacher’s supervision (Nelson, 2004, 144).

The conception of philosophical progress for P4C that I have developed so far leaves unresolved the problem of how the P4C teacher educates for philosophical progress. How does the P4C teacher enable their students to make, and learn to make, philosophical progress? In this chapter I resolve this problem by further elaborating the role of the P4C teacher as philosophical guide.

In section I, I combine the description of the P4C teacher from part I of the thesis with the conception of philosophical progress developed in part II. However, the conception that results places the P4C teacher in a precariously balanced position between controlling their students and abandoning them. I argue that P4C teachers need a practical stance they can take to keep them on a pedagogically sound footing without falling into either extreme where they would prevent their students from learning to make philosophical progress for themselves. In section II, to develop a theoretical basis for such a stance, I enrich the conception of educating that underlies P4C. Building on this in section III, I argue that to educate for philosophical progress, the P4C teacher should take the stance of a philosophical expedition-educator (rather than the stance of either a tour-leader or an expedition-leader).

I. The P4C teacher and educating for philosophical progress

In chapter 1, P4C was described as a kind of inquiry-constructivism where P4C students learn as a result of participating in open, collaborative, dialogical, inquiry. In chapter 2, I described the P4C teacher as philosophically self-effacing but procedurally strong. They should engage in co-inquiry with
their students, assisting them to be rigorous in their thinking, rather than leading them to cover a teacher-decided agenda of positions and arguments. They should show scholarly ignorance and be a thinking coach, encouraging their students to think for themselves and facilitate their own inquiry.

By combining this description with the conception of philosophical progress from part II of the thesis, I can now be more explicit about how the P4C teacher educates for philosophical progress. They ensure that students engage in philosophical inquiry in order to develop epistemically better conceptions, rather than to get the right answer or merely share opinions. They enable their students to identify philosophical problems and to formulate them as philosophical questions and they guide the subsequent inquiry so that their students choose productive paths, reach philosophical milestones and resolutions, and thus make philosophical progress. Furthermore, the P4C teacher should facilitate this process of making progress so that students learn to self-facilitate.

The role of the P4C teacher, in summary, is to enable students to follow the inquiry where it leads while ensuring philosophical rigour; to allow students to inquire for themselves while scaffolding productive inquiry; and to facilitate philosophical progress so students learn to make philosophical progress.

**The pedagogical tension for the P4C teacher**

To fulfil this role, the P4C teacher needs to find a balance between two contrary temptations: either taking control of the inquiry, or abandoning students to their own devices. I do not argue that these are the only logically possible positions (they are not). I argue that these are the two positions that P4C teachers find themselves drawn to in practice, irrespective of what other positions might be theoretically available. For example, as illustrated in the problem of philosophical progress in P4C (Box 4), the P4C teacher tends to either give students freedom and thus effectively abandons the possibility of progress (as they did in the first half of the discussion), or they direct the philosophical discussion so it makes progress, thus preventing students from learning to make progress for themselves (as they did in the second half of the discussion). In this sub-section I argue that the temptation to move towards these extremes creates a constant tension for the P4C teacher, and I illustrate various forms this might take.81

P4C teachers might initially allow their students to follow the paths of inquiry that they choose. Yet because the students do not know how to make progress, giving them this freedom is at the expense of productive inquiry. Instead of making progress and learning to make progress, P4C students:

- Wander aimlessly, choose paths of inquiry that are pointless or irrelevant or counter-productive, and become lost
- Agree on unjustifiable, unreasonable positions, interpretations or arguments
- Begin to think that any philosophical view is as good as any other (which is the superficial relativist position rejected in chapter 7), and the inquiry degenerates into the mere swapping of opinions with no critical evaluation.

In response, the P4C teacher is tempted to take control of the inquiry so they can lead their students forward. They direct students to the paths, milestones and resolutions that they think will be productive and important. But in doing this they, more or less subtly, control the inquiry and tell their students:

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81 This sort of tension has had widespread attention in the P4C and broader educational literature. Gregory (2003, 407) sees this as the tension between “leading too strongly, so that students abdicate their own intelligence, and leading too lightly, so that students’ growth is left undirected and their intelligence undisciplined.” Whitehead (1929, ch3) calls this “balancing the rhythmic claims for freedom and discipline.” Sprod (2001) describes this as the tension between exercises of teacher power which inculcate beliefs in students and exercises of student autonomy. He also attributes a version of the tension to Kant, expressed as the question: ‘How shall I cultivate freedom through force?’ (Sprod, 2001, 67). Lastly, Splitter and Sharp express the tension in the following way: “If the teacher approaches the inquiry with a strong sense of which conclusions (in the forms of beliefs and values) the community should reach, how can she still be impartial and fair-minded enough to guide it in following the inquiry ‘wherever it leads’? If on the other hand, she allows her students to engage in an open-ended inquiry, does she not put at risk her commitment to truth and right (correct) actions?” (1995, 138).
what to do (for their own good). Students start to think that there are right answers (the crude absolutist position rejected in chapter 7) and the inquiry degenerates into playing ‘Guess what the teacher wants me to think’. There is no longer genuine student inquiry and students are robbed of the opportunity to learn to inquire and make progress for themselves. They may make progress, but they remain dependent on their teacher and do not learn how to go on alone.

When the teacher realises that they are blocking their students from learning to inquire for themselves, they are tempted to revert back to allowing free inquiry. But then the inquiry gets lost or stalled again, and the tension continues, with the pedagogical pendulum swinging between the two extremes of teacher direction and student abandonment.

The implication is that there is a paradoxical tension at the heart of P4C. It seems that learning to make philosophical progress both requires, and is incompatible with, autonomous student inquiry. It is only by engaging in autonomous inquiry that students can learn to make progress for themselves. But if they engage in autonomous inquiry they do not make progress and so do not learn to make progress. On the other hand, they can make progress if the P4C teacher controls the agenda. But this makes the students dependent and passive which prevents them from learning to make progress for themselves. To educate for philosophical progress, the P4C teacher requires some way to resolve this paradoxical tension.

It might be thought that the tension could be resolved by first giving students the knowledge they need to inquire for themselves, and then having them engage in autonomous inquiry. There is no tension if ‘learning to inquire and make progress’ and ‘inquiring and making progress’ occur at different times. However, P4C is based on inquiry-constructivism which rejects any ‘learn now, use later’ educational praxis that separates the process of learning from using what is learned. Learning a practice, such as making philosophical progress, can only occur in practice. As Freire eloquently puts it, “a person learns to swim in the water, not in a library” (1993, 18). Likewise P4C students can only learn to make progress by making progress. So, the tension cannot be relieved by providing the necessary knowledge and then allowing students to inquire for themselves, because P4C students learn to make progress in philosophical inquiry by participating in philosophical inquiry.

It might also be thought that this tension could be resolved by providing an alternative and more sophisticated theory of learning and teaching that better describes the middle ground between control and abandonment. I presented such a theory in chapter 2 when I located the Community of Inquiry (CI) between the extremes of teacher-directed and free discussions. The CI provides a balanced position because the P4C teacher co-inquires with their students in an idea-centred critical dialogue, while also coaching and scaffolding their students to inquire for themselves.

However, such a sophisticated theory will not resolve the problem because any finely balanced theoretical position is difficult to maintain in practice. Even if P4C teachers understand the full import of the CI, because there are only subtle differences between the CI and other types of discussion, and because of the temptation to gravitate to the extremes when teaching, P4C teachers still tend to alternate between offering complete freedom and herding students so they traverse teacher-decided milestones. Even though this tension can be resolved in theory, it is an ongoing tension in practice.

The pedagogical philosophical problem for P4C teachers

The ongoing tension occurs for P4C teachers because of an inadequate conception of how to maintain, in practice, a pedagogical balance between too much control and too little. This is a philosophical problem because it arises from an inadequate conception, and it is a pedagogical philosophical problem because it arises from an inadequate conception of the pedagogical actions the P4C teacher should

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82 This is a common theory of learning. Young (1992, 54-5) cites theorists such as R.S. Peters, R.F. Dearden, R. Spaemann and John Stuart Mill as arguing that students need to be acquainted with the body of knowledge and procedures of a mature discipline before they can engage in independent disciplinary research and inquiry.
Although the description of the CI from chapter 2 is an adequate and congruent theoretical conception of the balance, P4C teachers can adopt this conception and yet not be able to conceptualise how to put it into practice. They can understand that they are meant to co-inquire, coach and facilitate philosophical progress, but the only pedagogical actions available for doing this appear to either direct the inquiry and so block students from learning to make progress for themselves, or allow students to do what they like, forsaking the possibility of making progress and of learning to make progress.

Although this is a pedagogical problem, it is also philosophical so it cannot be resolved simply by getting more practised at teaching P4C. It is not a ‘Goldilocks’ problem that can be resolved by fine-tuning a teacher’s pedagogical actions so they are not too controlling and not too abandoning, but just right. The problem is that P4C teachers lack an adequate conception of how to organise or manage their practice, and this can only be resolved by reconceptualisation. Further practise is important, but it will not be sufficient. Furthermore, P4C teachers do not have the luxury of beginning to teach P4C and then, as they teach, developing a conception that will resolve the pedagogical problem. As illustrated in chapter 1, if they do not already have this conception when they start teaching, they will unknowingly impede philosophical progress, and prevent their students from learning to make progress.

Nor can the pedagogical philosophical problem be resolved with a list of pedagogical actions P4C teachers can take and those they should avoid. Such a list could only specify the form of the pedagogical actions, but as I argued in chapter 2, the same form of pedagogical action can be performed for different functions, and with different results. This means that one teacher could follow the list and end up abandoning students, another could do the same actions and control their students, and yet another would find a balance between the two extremes. For example, asking “Why do you think that?” can be used to lead students to what the teacher thinks is the best answer or to invite students to share whatever responses they have without critical evaluation, or to encourage autonomous critical reflection. So, to resolve the pedagogical problem, and to find a balance between leading students to follow the teacher’s agenda, or leaving them to their own devices, P4C teachers need a conception they can use to judge which pedagogical actions they should perform, when they should perform them, and for what purpose. In other words, as I argued in chapter 2, they need a “macroposition” or “stance”.

My task in this chapter is to explicitly conceptualise a balanced pedagogical stance that P4C teachers can take to resolve the pedagogical philosophical problem they face. In section II, to strengthen the theoretical basis for this stance, I expand on the pedagogical theory of P4C from part I of the thesis, supplementing it with further important conceptions of education. In section III, I argue that the stance of a philosophical guide, and more specifically, that of an expedition-educator, would be efficacious for putting the enriched theoretical conception into practice.

II. Rich conceptions of educating

The pedagogical philosophical problem about educating for philosophical progress is impossible to resolve as long as educating is conceived of as the direct transmission of knowledge from a teacher,
who has it, to students, who do not, and who are dependent on the teacher to acquire it. Without a richer conception of educating, there is no room to construct a pedagogical stance between abandonment and imposition. In this section I describe such a conception of educating that shows how, in theory, a P4C teacher can educate their students to make progress while they are engaged in autonomous inquiry.

In the first sub-section I describe a rich conception of the knowledge needed to engage in productive inquiry. Then in the next three sub-sections I describe how this knowledge could be taught and learned (and argue that we should replace ‘teaching’ and ‘learning’ with the more neutral terms ‘educating for’ and ‘developing’ knowledge). The knowledge that P4C students need can be educated for indirectly and tacitly, collectively, and reflectively. Students develop this knowledge through participation in reasonable, critical, philosophical inquiry. However, these means of educating can seem to be incompatible with autonomous inquiry if we take an overly narrow conception of autonomy, so, I also describe a richer conception of autonomy. I argue that under this richer conception, even when knowledge is educated for and developed tacitly or collectively without reflection, this need not imply indoctrination, and can be compatible with students participating in autonomous inquiry. I conclude by showing how these rich conceptions of knowledge, educating and autonomy can provide a theoretical balance between teacher imposition and autonomous inquiry in P4C.

**Knowledge**

To learn to make progress and navigate when lost, P4C students will need knowledge about philosophical inquiry and progress, philosophical questions and problems, philosophical moves, and reasoned evaluationism (based on my argument from chapters 4-7). This knowledge should not be conceptualised solely as propositional knowledge or ‘knowing-that.’ P4C students need know-how and know-why, which Munro (2007, 2008) calls experiential, conceptual and procedural knowledge, as well as metacognitive knowledge about effective strategies for making progress. They need explicit, articulated knowledge, as well as what Polanyi (1966) termed tacit, unarticulated knowledge, or what Bourdieu (1977) calls “habitus”. Finally, the knowledge should also be conceptualised as philosophical dispositions and ways of being. This knowledge provides the philosophical equivalent of crampons, ice-axes, ropes, packs, boots, telescopes, navigation techniques, compasses, maps and an inquiring mind, which jointly enable P4C students to negotiate philosophical problems and make progress.

A rich conception of educating is needed to understand how students can develop such knowledge. ‘Teaching’ would be an uncontroversial description of the transmission of propositional knowledge, but it does not apply so easily to developing knowledge such as character traits and dispositions, or tacit, experiential knowledge, which may be unteachable in the narrow sense, but still learnable. Also, even propositional knowledge need not be taught by telling, but may emerge as the result of inquiry. I use the term ‘develop’ to include all the ways students might come to ‘learn’ knowledge, including being achieved as the fruits of inquiry, being constructed through participation, as well as through direct acquisition. I use the term ‘educate for’ to include all the different pedagogical actions that teachers might perform so that students develop knowledge, including setting up a conducive environment, cultivating or coaching, as well as by directly imparting knowledge. In the context of this thesis, then, my interest is in how P4C teachers can educate for philosophical progress while students engage in autonomous inquiry, so the students develop the knowledge they need to make progress for themselves.

**Educating indirectly and tacitly through participation in an educative environment**

Educating for knowledge, according to Dewey, is not a matter of inserting the knowledge by “direct contagion” or “literal inculcation” (1916, 11) because “we never educate directly”, but only “indirectly by means of the environment” (1916, 19). Put in another way, knowledge is educated for by enculturation and immersion in a culture of practice (Perkins, Jay & Tishman, 1993; Tishman, Jay & Perkins, 1993; Tishman, Perkins & Jay, 1995), or alternatively, by initiation into a practice (Smeyers & Burbules, 2006). In other words, students develop new knowledge as a result of their participation in an educative environment set up by the teacher.
In the case of P4C, the knowledge students need for autonomous inquiry can be educated for and developed indirectly or tacitly by initiating them into the practice of philosophical inquiry in the Community of Inquiry (CI). Burbules explains:

Tacit teaching refers to the many forms of informal instruction – some intentional, some unintentional, and some difficult to categorise simply as one or the other – by which skills, capacities, and dispositions are passed along within a domain of practice … It is also difficult to identify exactly how or when this tacit knowledge is learned. It is ‘picked up’ over time, learned through a combination of observation, imitation, correction, and involvement with some ongoing pattern of practice into which a novice practitioner is initiated (2008, 668-669).

Tacit methods of educating are compatible with autonomous student inquiry in P4C. When initiating students into the practice of inquiry the teacher does not control their students or the inquiry. Instead, they indirectly educate for knowledge by setting up the conditions for students to inquire for themselves, which in P4C, is by setting up a CI. To do this, the teacher exercises their “power at the level of overall control of the educative environment, rather than at the level of determining each individual action” and so she creates a space for autonomous student inquiry (Sprod, 2001, 73-74).

**Educating collectively**

The educative environment of the CI offers a social or collective means of educating, where the CI is both ‘learner’ and ‘educator.’ The CI learns how to distribute the thinking needed to progress a philosophical inquiry as a team learns to play together and win, or as a climbing expedition learns to climb together and conquer their mountain. The community as a whole can then perform an educative role. By participating in a CI that makes philosophical progress, students indirectly learn to make philosophical progress.

This collective learning process leaves little room for the teacher to directly impose knowledge in a way that would restrict student autonomy. The teacher coaches the community so it learns to make progress, but they do not direct the inquiry nor control individuals. Students develop knowledge by participating in the practice of communal inquiry and internalising the emergent patterns and values of inquiry.

**Educating reflectively**

Explicit and direct means of educating for philosophical progress can also be compatible with autonomous student inquiry, if the required knowledge is introduced in a reflective manner. This means giving students the opportunity to critically reflect on the knowledge they are offered before they accept it, rather than presenting it as the authoritative position that must be accepted. In particular, it requires an educative environment where students are encouraged to only accept a claim on the basis of how reasonable it is (rather than on the basis of the teacher’s authority).

To introduce knowledge reflectively, without interfering with autonomous student inquiry, a teacher might frequently be neutral or impartial and present alternatives and the various reasons for and against these so that students can make up their own minds. Alternatively, based on the Deweyan view of reflective education discussed in chapter 1, knowledge can be offered to students as a stimulus for further inquiry, such as a problem or question, rather than a final answer to accept (Lipman, 2003, 74). One way to do this is by having these problems and questions raised in the narrative or dialogue of the P4C stimulus materials, another is to have the teacher ask the questions and raise the problems during an inquiry (Lipman, 1996). By reading the stories, and reflecting on the problems and questions that interest them, students develop the knowledge they need to inquire and progress for themselves, without indoctrination.

Bereiter & Scardamalia (1996, 490) also argue that the know-how developed by the team, expedition or community does not reduce to individual knowledge.
**Autonomous inquiry**

I have offered rich conceptions of educating so as to show how student autonomy can be compatible with the teacher educating for philosophical progress. However, some unnecessarily narrow conceptions of autonomy are incompatible with these conceptions of educating. So, in this sub-section I describe and then challenge three overly narrow conceptions of autonomy. In response I present a broader, richer, and more reasonable conception of autonomy which allows, and even requires, the P4C teacher to educate for philosophical progress indirectly, tacitly, collectively and reflectively.

A common, but overly narrow, view is that students must be completely independent if they are to be autonomous. Under this conception, autonomous inquiry in P4C would require P4C students to control their inquiry with no influence (direct or indirect) from the teacher. This conception implies that student autonomy is always incompatible with the teacher educating for philosophical progress, and so it implies that it is impossible to achieve a balance between control and abandonment, and impossible for students to learn to make progress while engaging in autonomous inquiry.

However, student autonomy should be understood as different from complete independence. Autonomy requires the absence of extreme and coercive forms of influence such as indoctrination, manipulation and control, not the absence of all influence. Student autonomy is compatible with some educative influence from the teacher when the relationship between teacher and students is one of co-participation, co-inquiry, and co-construction of knowledge (but not when the relationship is between active transmitter and passive, dependent recipient).

A second broader view, though still overly narrow, is that autonomy is compatible with an educative influence, but only if it is reflective. If students are inculcated with knowledge without critical reflection then it is indoctrination not autonomy. Under this conception, the only way to educate for philosophical progress while preserving student autonomy is to educate reflectively.

This implies that the standard way of educating for philosophical progress in P4C is incompatible with autonomous inquiry, because the indirect, tacit and collective learning process does not involve sufficient reflection from students. P4C students tend to learn the procedures of philosophical inquiry indirectly and tacitly, and only reflect on this knowledge at a later time. For example, students become tacitly accustomed to giving reasons before giving reasons becomes a topic for critical reflection.

A more problematic implication of this conception of autonomy is that it makes learning to be autonomous either paradoxical or impossible. Under this conception, autonomous inquiry is only possible on the basis of knowledge developed with critical reflection. But how do students learn to critically reflect? They can only develop this knowledge in an unreflective manner, which counts as indoctrination under this narrow conception of autonomy, and this implies either the paradox that autonomy is based on indoctrination, or that autonomous inquiry is impossible.

This second conception of student autonomy should also be rejected in favour of a broader conception, such as that offered by Sprod (2001, 175-176), where student autonomy is based on knowledge developed without reflection but where this does not imply indoctrination. In particular, students can engage in autonomous inquiry on the basis of knowledge that they have accepted without conscious reflection when: 1) they will have the opportunity to reflectively evaluate this knowledge; 2) the knowledge developed promotes their ability to think for themselves and critically reflect in a reasonable manner; and 3) they would endorse the knowledge and the means by which it was educated for and developed, if they were capable of critical evaluation and chose to critically evaluate the knowledge. Under this conception of autonomy, indirect, tacit and collaborative means of educating for philosophical progress can be compatible with autonomous inquiry, because they meet these conditions. For example, educating for reasoning skills and dispositions by tacitly initiating students into the culture of reasonableness in a CI is compatible with autonomous inquiry because this knowledge is a necessary precondition for autonomous inquiry and critical reflection, and once they are initiated into a culture of reasonableness students are able to critically reflect on and endorse this knowledge.
A third common, and also overly narrow, view of autonomy is that it requires independent individuals. I also challenge this individualist criterion. In the context of P4C, autonomy need not be an individual quality, and autonomous student inquiry, as discussed in chapter 6, refers to a community of distributed and shared inquiry, better conceptualised as thinking together, not thinking independently (Kennedy, 1999a). The whole community is lost together, teacher included, and together they must find their way. Like mountain climbers they cannot conquer Everest on their own, but they can as part of a team. In this way, autonomous inquiry is compatible with the influence and support of a community, including the teacher, and the students can engage in autonomous inquiry together with their teacher, even if individual students cannot do so independently.

Achieving a balance through participation in a Community of Inquiry

The conceptions of knowledge, educating and autonomy that I have presented show how it is theoretically possible to educate for philosophical progress in P4C while students participate in autonomous inquiry, and thus how it is possible to achieve a balance between controlling a discussion and abandoning it. The P4C teacher indirectly educates for the knowledge their students need by setting up a CI, and then by participating in philosophical co-inquiry with them in the CI. Being immersed in collaborative, reflective, philosophical inquiry is how P4C students learn to inquire and make progress. They develop some of the knowledge they need as the result of their inquiry. Other knowledge can be explicitly offered to students during their inquiry, on the condition that they critically reflect on it before accepting it. Further knowledge is developed tacitly and collectively, but without reflection, by internalising the reasonable culture of the CI. A P4C teacher can legitimately educate for knowledge in these ways without restricting student autonomy because autonomous inquiry in P4C is compatible with, and requires, interdependent participation in an educative environment. Educating for philosophical progress, on this model, becomes “something educators and students do together” not “something done to children and students” (Biesta, 2008, 7).

III. The P4C teacher as guide

In this section I argue that if P4C teachers adopt the stance of a guide, they will be able to put into practice the rich, balanced conception of education described in the previous section. The stance provides a heuristic that will enable them to judge which pedagogical actions to take and when to take them, so they can educate for philosophical progress without controlling or abandoning their students.

The stance of a guide is useful because of the similarity between making philosophical progress and navigating when lost. Learning to make philosophical progress involves learning to resolve philosophical problems, reaching milestones along the way. This is like learning to navigate through a forest when you are disoriented and where the forest is overgrown, where there are no paths, or where the paths are hidden, confusing and often lead to dead-ends and pitfalls. My argument is that if P4C teachers take the stance of a guide, they will be able to guide their students in autonomous and productive philosophical inquiry, so their students learn to navigate and make progress for themselves. Guiding an inquiry so it makes progress is the means by which the P4C teacher educates for philosophical progress. P4C students learn to inquire for themselves by participating in autonomous inquiry, guided by their teacher. The P4C teacher-as-guide immerses students in a philosophical CI

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87 Thinking together should be understood in the objective, pragmatist sense from chapter 4, where the world mediates the dialogue. I am not advocating that the group can think what it likes without constraint.

88 The philosophy teacher is often described as a guide. See Cam (1997, 5), Burbules writing about Wittgenstein (2008, 668) and Nelson (2004, 144). However, ‘guide’ is only one metaphor used to describe the P4C teacher. The P4C teacher is also said to be: “a provoker, a manager, a motivator, a modulator, a facilitator, a coach, a weaver of threads, a midwife and a gadfly” (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 140), or a conductor who orchestrates and coordinates (Cam, 1995, 41). Even though these metaphors illuminate important facets of the P4C teacher’s role, I argue that the elaborated metaphor of the teacher-as-guide from this chapter provides a more useful stance.
where teacher and students co-inquire, moving together through the stages of inquiry, achieving milestones, and making progress. The teacher participates, but does not control the inquiry. The pedagogical actions they use to guide the inquiry educate for, but do not transmit, philosophical knowledge to their students. By engaging in such an inquiry, in a process of participatory collective learning, P4C students internalise the practices that enable the community to make progress and directly and indirectly develop the knowledge they need to make philosophical progress for themselves.

Although I argue that the P4C teacher should be like a philosophical guide, I am not trying to prove something about teaching P4C based on it being analogous to guiding. Instead, the metaphor of a guide is used to simplify and illuminate the theoretical account of the balanced pedagogy of P4C so it is more easily employed, providing a stance that P4C teachers can adopt in practice. P4C teachers can use this stance to judge what pedagogical actions to take and when to take them by asking themselves: How can I guide my students so they can make and learn to make philosophical progress for themselves?

**Three types of guide: Tour-leader, expedition-leader & expedition-educator**

I have argued that P4C teachers should take the stance of a guide because this will enable them to balance imposition and abandonment in their pedagogical practice. Yet there are different ways of guiding, some of which fail to achieve this balance, so I need to specify the particular stance P4C teachers should take so they can keep to the balanced pedagogical practice.

I argue that P4C teachers should take the particular stance of an expedition-educator. They should see themselves as on a journey with their students to an unknown destination, where they enable them to follow the inquiry where it leads, and to learn to inquire for themselves. They should reject the similar stances of a tour-leader or an expedition-leader because these involve excessive teacher control of the inquiry and are thus incompatible with autonomous student inquiry and learning to make progress. In the rest of this chapter I discuss and illustrate these three kinds of guide, showing how the expedition-educator is the most efficacious stance for P4C teachers because it enables them to educate for philosophical progress while still allowing and encouraging autonomous inquiry.

My account of the three kinds of guide extends two distinctions from Burbules’ (2000a). Burbules first distinguishes between “two kinds of transition out of doubt: one by progress toward a fixed answer, one by movement toward an unknown destination” (175). He also distinguishes between teaching as conversion and as translation. Teaching as conversion involves the teacher “inducing the learner to abandon a corrupt set of beliefs, to experience the crisis of aporia, and then, with the force of revelatory discovery, to be moved into the light of truth” (183). Teaching as translation involves the teacher “making sufficient associations between the familiar and the foreign to allow the learner to make further associations, to find other paths, and eventually to become a translator, a pathmaker, on their own” (184). Tour-leading involves teaching as conversion and the teacher leading their students to a fixed answer. Expedition-leading involves a combination of teaching as conversion and movement towards an unknown destination where the teacher controls the direction of the inquiry, even though they do not know where they will end up. Expedition-educating involves teaching as translation and movement to an unknown destination where the teacher prepares the students to go forward on their own.

**Tour-leader**

A teacher-as-tour-leader takes students along a path that has already been blazed, down pre-determined paths and to pre-existing positions. Rather than following the inquiry where it leads, the tour-leader pre-decides the positions, arguments and distinctions students need to know, and then they lead them to these. Being guided in this way is like reading a story: The ending and all the chapters are already decided, and the reader has no choice about where they are going, yet there is a certain amount of activity required from the reader to get there and so they are participating in the story at a minimal level. However, this level of participation is not sufficient for autonomous student co-inquiry.
In the following illustration of tour-leading the teacher’s aim is that their students understand the main argument for hard determinism. Rather than transmitting this argument to them, they help their students to understand the argument by leading them through a pre-planned ‘inquiry’ process.

**Box 17: Illustration of the philosophy teacher as tour-leader**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Give me an example of one time when you thought you were free.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>I reckon I was free when I decided to take this philosophy subject.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>OK, why do you think that you were free to make that decision?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Well, it’s not compulsory, and I could have taken Art History or English instead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Yes, but why did you choose a philosophy subject rather than English or Art History?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>I guess I’ve always been interested in philosophy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Why have you always been interested in philosophy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>I don’t know, maybe it was because my dad read me philosophy books when I was little, or maybe because I always wondered about philosophical problems, like whether others saw the same colours that I did.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>So, in other words, it was either your environment or your innate interests that caused you to want to do a philosophy subject. Am I correct that either your upbringing from your father, or your curiosity made you want to take a philosophy subject?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Kind of, yeah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>But if your choice was caused by your innate nature or your upbringing, then it isn’t a free choice at all, because you don’t have any control over these things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>I hadn’t thought of that!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>This is the main argument for hard determinism. Every time we think we are free, our choices ultimately rest on a cause outside our control, so we weren’t really free after all.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a result of participating in a tour-led ‘inquiry’, students understand the outcomes the teacher pre-decided they should cover (and probably have a better understanding than if they had merely been told about them). However, they were dependant on the teacher to lead them to these outcomes, and so they do not learn how to inquire for themselves.

**Expedition-leader**

The expedition-leader and expedition-educator both differ from the tour-leader because they involve “movement towards an unknown destination” (Burbules, 2000a, 175). Rather than the teacher directing students through a tour to known destinations, teacher and students are on an expedition together into uncharted territory. The teacher does not have a path mapped out in advance, and allows him or herself to be lost with their students, guiding them to forge new paths and to follow the inquiry where it leads.

The teacher-as-expedition-leader blazes a trail for the students where none existed before. They aim to take their students through an inquiry that makes philosophical progress, and as the leader they pick out a path to follow and then they direct students along this path. They are the experts and have no intention of following the students’ paths or of allowing them to take the lead, and so they do not engage in autonomous co-inquiry or teach their students to make progress for themselves. Being guided in this way is like a child being led down an unfamiliar path by their parents, or like a herd of cows being led to find new pastures by their herder. The child and the herd have to travel the path, but they are not the ones in charge and go where they are told. Likewise, when guided by an expedition-leader, students follow the inquiry where it leads, but they do not do so autonomously.

In the following illustration of expedition-leading, students and teacher are on a philosophical expedition without a pre-planned agenda to cover. The class had read a story about a boy who was so
sick he could not go outside and now they are discussing whether he was free. Although neither teacher nor students know where they will end up, the teacher is in control and decides which path of inquiry to take, and then directs their students down this path. Even though they do not have a final conclusion in mind, the teacher’s questions lead students to the milestones the teacher wants them to reach. The right-hand column in the illustration describes the teacher’s rationale for their pedagogical actions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dialogue</th>
<th>Analysis of teacher’s intention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student</strong></td>
<td>I reckon the boy didn’t want to go outside anyway, so he did what he wanted, and you’re free if you do what you want.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher</strong></td>
<td>Let’s examine some examples where someone does what they want and see if they count as free or not. 1. Someone hasn’t eaten for some time, feels hungry and wants to have a sandwich. If they have a sandwich is it a free choice? 2. Someone was raised to always be polite, and wants to say thank you for a gift. If they say thank you, are they saying it freely?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student</strong></td>
<td>Well I guess that the hungry person is not free because you have to eat to stay alive, and anyone who is hungry wants to eat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher</strong></td>
<td>So sometimes we can be unfree when we do what we want? The teacher asks this question with the intention that their students agree.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student</strong></td>
<td>Yeah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher</strong></td>
<td>What are some other examples like this? He/she intends to ‘drive home’ their point.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student</strong></td>
<td>What about breathing? I want to breathe, but I’m not free, because I couldn’t stop even if I wanted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher</strong></td>
<td>Good. So let’s go back to the original suggestion – Do we agree that you’re free when you do what you want? The teacher asks this question intending their students to explicitly reject the original view, as he/she had planned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student</strong></td>
<td>No. You can be unfree even when you do what you want.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher</strong></td>
<td>Some philosophers have argued that being free is being able to do something different. Let’s consider this view instead. The teacher decided that their students should next consider this conception of freedom so he/she introduces it to their students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in the two illustrations, neither tour-leading nor expedition-leading is compatible with autonomous inquiry or with students learning to make progress for themselves. In both cases, the teacher leads and the students are more or less dependent followers. The teacher directs their students through a teacher-decided agenda, and does not intend to educate them to be able to go forward alone. In both cases the teacher controls the inquiry and therefore, neither the tour-leader nor the expedition-leader offers a stance that can resolve the philosophical pedagogical problem faced by P4C teachers.

**Expedition-educator**

The teacher-as-expedition-educator co-blazes a trail with their students, and then participates in autonomous co-inquiry with them. In this way they provide educative guidance, thus enabling their
students to learn to find their own paths. At various times this educative guidance involves modelling, coaching, advising about, and refereeing philosophical progress. This is unlike the tour-leader or expedition-leader, whose sole role is to lead their students to teacher-decided outcomes. Other possible names for the expedition-educator include: promotor, producer, advisor, navigator, enabler or empowerer. Each of these highlights an important facet of the role of the expedition-educator, but they tend to either mix the metaphor, have negative connotations or are just ‘clunky’.

The expedition-educator is an efficacious stance for the P4C teacher, because it enables them to balance pedagogical control and autonomy. They can judge which pedagogical actions to take according to what will enable their students to engage in autonomous inquiry and learn to guide themselves.

The following illustration of expedition-educating starts at the same place as the previous illustration, where students are trying to resolve the problem of whether the boy in the story is free or not, and likewise, this illustration does not involve a pre-planned itinerary. The difference is that the teacher-as-expedition-educator sees their job as educating for philosophical progress so that eventually their students can make progress for themselves. They work out how they would judge how to proceed if they were trying to resolve the problem of whether the boy is free, and then they enable their students to make the same sort of judgements. Even though the expedition-educator sometimes perform pedagogical actions with the same form as the expedition-leader, they do so for different intentions or justifications (as the right-hand column indicates). Every action the expedition-educator takes, including what they do not do, is intended to enable their students to learn to inquire and make progress.

| Box 19: Illustration of the philosophy teacher as expedition-educator |
|---|---|
| **Student** | I reckon the boy didn’t want to go outside anyway, so he did what he wanted, and you’re free if you do what you want. |
| **Teacher** | Who agrees and who disagree with this suggested definition? |
| | Most of the students agree |
| **Teacher** | Why do we mostly agree? |
| | The teacher judges that to make further progress, students should justify their agreement, and so he/she asks for justification. He/she judges that asking more substantive questions would be overly directive, and would impede students from learning to make the inquiry moves. |
| **Student** | Well, if you can’t do what you want, like in prison, or if you’re a kid, then you aren’t free. |
| **Teacher** | That’s a good example of how we lack freedom when we can’t do what we want. But we should also test our definition by considering if it’s possible to do what we want and still be unfree. Is that OK, or should we consider something else first? |
| | General agreement to test the definition. |
Teacher  Consider the following examples:
   1. Someone likes to play soccer and wants to play soccer.
   2. Someone hasn’t eaten for some time, feels hungry and wants to have a sandwich.
   3. Someone was raised to always be polite, and wants to say thank you for a gift.
If they do what they want and play soccer, have a sandwich, or say “thank you”, are they doing it freely?

The students discuss the examples in small groups before presenting their conclusions.

Student  We think the soccer player is free, because they aren’t forced to like soccer. But the hungry person isn’t free because they’re forced to want to eat by their hunger. We weren’t sure about the polite person because they’re kind of be forced to be polite by their parents, but they could choose to be impolite.

Teacher  So, what do we conclude about the definition we suggested at the start?

Student  Well, it’s not correct that we’re always free when we do what we want, because sometimes what we want is forced on us, like hunger. But it is correct that we’re unfree if we can’t do what we want.

Teacher  So how should we modify our definition?

A long pause before someone speaks. Many students look puzzled.

Student  Maybe freedom is when we can do what we want and when we aren’t forced to do it.

Teacher  It sounds like we’re thinking about two different kinds of freedom. Some people think freedom is being free to do something, like free to do what you want. Other people think freedom is being free from something, like free from force. Is freedom best understood as being free from, being free to, or both?

Student  I reckon it’s about being free to do something else.

Teacher  Why do you think this?

In order to make progress, the teacher judged that their students need to thoroughly test their suggested definition. So, he/she selects a range of examples that are likely to challenge their definitions, but without having a particular conclusion that he/she wants their students to reach.

The teacher asks for the next thinking move needed to make progress, as he/she did earlier. The teacher chooses not to draw conclusions for the students as this would rob them of the opportunity to learn to do this themselves.

As above, the teacher keeps prompting the next move in the inquiry without attempting to lead students to teacher-decided milestones.

The teacher judged that their students were struggling with articulating a definition of freedom. He/she introduces this distinction, and asks this question, to help their students clarify the view that was emerging in the inquiry. Students know that when the teacher asks a question like this that he/she wants a thoughtful response from the students, and he/she is not fishing for the ‘right’ answer that he/she already has in mind.

As above, the teacher judges that further justification is needed and so they ask for this.
Because the pedagogical actions of expedition-educators and expedition-leaders tend to have the same form, the differences between these guides is best seen in the different intentions for their pedagogical actions. The expedition-leader performs pedagogical actions in order to direct students to make progress following a teacher-decided path, but with no intention of relinquishing their leadership. The expedition-educator might take the same form of actions, but they do so to make progress with their co-inquiry and with the intention that their students learn to judge how to make progress. They intend to teach their students how to inquire, rather than to lead them to particular milestones or outcomes, and even when they do seem to lead them to milestones or outcomes, this is only in order to teach students how to do this for themselves.

The expedition-leader takes an outcome-leading approach (see chapter 2). They choose their pedagogical actions on the basis of: 1) judging what substantive outcomes and milestones they think the inquiry should cover if it is to make progress, and then 2) judging what pedagogical actions will lead their students to cover these milestones and reach these outcomes. For example, in the illustration of expedition-leading, the teacher judged that their students needed to grasp that we could act on our wants and still be unfree, and then they led their students to this understanding.

The expedition-educator, on the other hand, takes a thinking or inquiry-educating approach (called a thinking-encouraging approach in chapter 2). They choose their pedagogical actions by: 1) judging how they can enable their students to learn to make progress, and in particular, 2) judging what pedagogical actions will scaffold their students to make progress for themselves, thus enabling them to learn to make progress. For example, in the illustration of expedition-educating, the teacher judged that to learn to make progress their students needed to understand the process of philosophical inquiry. They judged that they could achieve this by guiding their students through an efficacious inquiry process, where they indicate which moves will advance the inquiry, but allow the students to choose how to make the moves. They guided the inquiry in this way by asking thought-encouraging questions to prompt and model the process (as discussed in chapter 6). If the students were more or less experienced, they might have judged other pedagogical actions to be efficacious to educate for philosophical progress.

The expedition-educator has two broad kinds of educative-guidance they can offer to their students: procedural or substantive guidance.\(^89\) I finish this section by discussing these two forms of guidance and how the expedition-educator can use them to educate for philosophical progress.

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\(^89\) This is not a hard distinction, and there are fuzzy borders between the two types of guidance, but it is nevertheless a useful distinction for the expedition-educator.
Procedural guidance

A useful way for the expedition-educator to balance imposition and abandonment is to offer guidance about the process of inquiry. By offering advice about what inquiry moves to make, the P4C teacher enables students to advance their inquiry, while allowing them to autonomously choose the agenda for the inquiry. For example, asking a thought-encouraging question such as “Why?” prompts inquiry moves (in this case giving reasons) without directing students to any particular substantive issues, enabling them to choose the substantive path they will take. It should be noted however, that if a teacher took an outcome-leading approach, they could ask thought-encouraging questions in order to control an inquiry and lead students to teacher-decided milestones. For an expedition-guide to balance imposition and abandonment they should ask thought-encouraging questions with an inquiry-educating approach, where they aim to guide philosophical progress and scaffold students to guide themselves.

Although both thought-encouraging questions and substantive philosophical questions (discussed in chapter 5) can be asked without directing students to a teacher-decided answer, the procedural guidance offered by thought-encouraging questions is better suited for educating for progress. Thought-encouraging questions articulate the thinking of an expert inquirer, and provide a valuable model that students can emulate, without taking control of the substantive agenda of the inquiry from the students. Substantive questions, on the other hand, do not provide a model of philosophical inquiry to emulate in different inquiry situations. A question such as, ‘Is lying like stealing?’ is only useful in this inquiry at this point, unlike the thought-encouraging question ‘What is an example of that?’ which gives students a valuable move that will assist them to make progress in any inquiry. Also, when a teacher asks substantive questions this directs students to teacher-decided substantive issues, thus controlling the agenda of the inquiry to a greater extent than if they asked thought-encouraging questions. For example, asking “Is the brain the same as the mind?” will direct students to consider the teacher-chosen issue of the relationship between the brain and the mind, unlike “What are the implications of that?” which allows the students to choose the agenda of their inquiry, and practise inquiring for themselves. This does not imply that expedition-educators should not ask substantive questions. In some situations they can be an effective way to educate for philosophical progress, as I discuss in the next sub-section.

As well as asking thought-encouraging questions to prompt students to guide themselves, the P4C expedition-educator may also offer procedural guidance in the form of exercises that have their students practise and understand the various skills, moves and tools of inquiry. These exercises should be introduced when they will help students progress their inquiry. For example, the P4C expedition-educator might see that students are struggling to make relevant and significant distinctions and that this is impeding their current progress, so she chooses to introduce an exercise to help them improve in this area of philosophical thinking. She might explain what distinctions are and how they could be useful to their inquiry, and then ask the students to practise making distinctions - perhaps by first considering how mothers and fathers or pushing and pulling are the same and how they are different (Cam, 2006a, 49-50). When the students have had sufficient practice, they can apply their growing knowledge of making distinctions to their current line of inquiry to assist them to make further progress.

Substantive guidance

In addition to offering guidance about the process of inquiry, the P4C teacher-as-expedition-educator can also educate for philosophical progress by offering substantive guidance, helping students construct a map of the philosophical terrain. If they abide by the following three conditions, they can offer substantive knowledge to their students while allowing them to engage in autonomous inquiry, and enabling them to learn to inquire for themselves:

1) Information: The P4C expedition-educator should introduce substantive philosophical knowledge to allow students to make informed choices about how to progress. The knowledge should be offered as

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90 For this reason they are also called procedural questions (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, 58-59).
information not as mandatory directions, so the students still have the responsibility for the direction of their inquiry. For example, the expedition-educator could:

- Suggest lines of inquiry and questions to address that they know have helped other philosophers in this situation: “It might help us to consider the question…”
- Indicate terrain others have found problematic when taking these paths: “We might have problems because of…”
- Point out trails that others have taken through the problematic terrain: “Others have thought that we could … Would this help us here?”

2) *Fallible:* The knowledge should only be offered in a spirit of fallibilism, where teacher and student suggestions alike are treated as tentative, where every suggestion is judged on its reasonableness, and where students have the opportunity and are encouraged to problematise and challenge suggestions (as discussed earlier as a condition for reflective means of educating). Put in a different way, the knowledge should be introduced as settled knowledge in the Deweyan sense of being the best we have so far, but not so settled that it may not become the problematic topic of further inquiry (1938, ch1).

This means that the expedition-educator should avoid offering substantive philosophical advice until a CI is well-established and the students will judge the advice on its justification not on the basis of it coming from the teacher. Inexperienced students are likely to accept whatever the teacher suggests, assuming it to be the ‘correct’ path to take. If this is the case the P4C teacher as expedition-guide should favour procedural guidance. The P4C expedition-educator can offer more substantive advice when students are more able to self-guide and when they will take any advice offered simply as more information to help them follow their own inquiry, but not as ‘right’ answers.

3) *Further the current inquiry:* Substantive knowledge should only be introduced when it will help to further the current inquiry, rather than to follow the teacher’s agenda.

A useful means of offering substantive, fallible information that will further the current inquiry is to ask substantive philosophical questions. The expedition-educator can take an inquiry-encouraging approach and pose a problem or ask a question as a stimulus for further inquiry, rather than to lead students to the answer the teacher has in mind (as discussed earlier under the reflective means of educating). To enhance the inquiry-educating function of these questions, the expedition-educator should also explain how they devised their question and why they asked this question at this point in the inquiry, so students come to learn how to ask their own substantive philosophical questions.

**IV. Distinguishing the three kinds of guide**

In this section I further explore the differences between expedition-educating, tour-leading and expedition-leading. This will elaborate the stance of the expedition-educator, making it more useful for P4C teachers.

Although the three ways of guiding are different in form and function, there are no sharp distinctions between them, or between guiding and transmission teaching (which is an important reason why it is so difficult for P4C teachers to keep to the balanced pedagogy of P4C). Transmission teaching involves taking students to a pre-decided destination without any inquiry. Transmission becomes tour-leading when the teacher emphasises the journey as well as the destination. Tour-leading becomes expedition-leading when the teacher emphasises following the inquiry where it leads and relinquishes their pre-decided destination. Expedition-leading becomes expedition-educating when the teacher gives up herding the students along a teacher chosen path, participates in co-inquiry with their students and coaches them to guide themselves. Expedition-educating becomes abandoning students if the teacher gives up co-inquiry and coaching and makes no interventions (thus they might be called a no-intervention-guide). The similarities and differences between the types of guidance can be represented by placing them on two continua, one nested within the other (see Figure 8).
Figure 8: Different types of guidance, with letters and numbers indicating their characteristics

Characteristics of the different types of guidance:

a. The outcomes are pre-decided
b. Students develop philosophical knowledge and learn by participating in inquiry
c. Neither teacher nor student knows where the inquiry will go so they have to follow it where it leads

1. The outcomes and milestones that students will reach are decided by the teacher
The guide educates for philosophical knowledge as students participate in the inquiry
The students are guided to follow the inquiry
The students are coached or scaffolded so they can self-guide
The guide is a co-inquirer on the journey with the students, following a co-decided agenda
The inquiry follows the students’ agenda

The transmission-teacher is only committed to characteristic a, and they simply tell their students what they want them to know. The teacher-guides (tour-leader, expedition-leader, expedition-educator, no-intervention-‘guide’) are committed to the inquiry learning of characteristic b, where inquiry is necessary for developing knowledge. The teacher as tour-leader is committed to characteristics a and b. They pre-decide the destination and route for the inquiry but they are not committed to characteristic c where learning is the result of following the inquiry where it leads. All of the expedition-guides (Expedition-leader, expedition-educator and no-intervention-‘guide’) are committed to the expedition-learning of characteristic b and c, where learning is the result of following the inquiry where it leads.

The teacher as expedition-leader is only committed to characteristics 1-3. They follow the inquiry where it leads, but ignore characteristics 4 and 5 where learning involves autonomous student co-inquiry. The teacher as expedition-educator is committed to characteristics 2-5, but not 6, and so engages in co-inquiry with students without deciding the milestones or outcomes the inquiry will reach. The no-intervention-‘guide’ is committed to characteristic 6 alone, and they ignore characteristic 2-5 and so provide no support, guidance or teaching for their students.
The stance of the expedition-educator can be further distinguished from the similar stances of expedition-leader or tour-leader by considering three other important distinctions: scaffolding versus structuring, being a midwife rather than a leader, and co-inquiry versus paternalism. I use these distinctions to elaborate how the stance of the expedition-educator enables P4C teachers to balance imposition and abandonment in their pedagogical practice, which I summarise in the conclusion.

**Scaffolding not structuring, and the changing sub-roles of an expedition-educator**

The difference between the styles of guiding can be illuminated by Ritchhart’s (2002, 160) distinction between scaffolding and structuring. The expedition-educator scaffolds inquiry, while the tour-leader and expedition-leader structure it.

Scaffolding is the provision of support so that students can autonomously complete a task while structure involves directing students through a prescribed set of actions so that they can complete the task almost mindlessly and without having to make autonomous judgements. Scaffolding gives students some choice of what to do while structure tells them what to do. Structuring inquiry can assist students to achieve philosophical milestones, but will not in itself teach them how to cope with new problems and create their own paths. Only scaffolding allows students to learn how to inquire for themselves.

This distinction provides practical advice for the P4C teacher-as-expedition-guide:

> Ask yourself, Am I helping students to activate their thinking and make appropriate decisions about next steps, or am I telling students what step or action I want them to do next? The former actions are a scaffold for students’ thinking; the latter provide a structure for students’ work (Ritchhart, 2002, 160).

The expedition-educator provides scaffolding so their students have assistance but still have to judge for themselves how to follow the inquiry. For example, with inexperienced students the expedition-educator may suggest a philosophical question to be addressed, but they leave it up to the students to formulate possible answers to this question, and thus to decide the direction of the inquiry. On the other hand, both the tour-leader and the expedition-leader structure inquiry. Even when they appear to give their students a choice, perhaps by asking questions of them, they use a subtle form of structure to induce or manipulate their students to follow the teacher-determined path, without allowing them to make autonomous judgements about where the inquiry should go.

The P4C teacher-as-expedition-educator uses different means of scaffolding student inquiry depending on how well their students can guide themselves. The less the students are able to make reasoned judgements about what to do next, the more frequent and substantial are the scaffolds provided by the teacher, as I describe in the following series in Box 20. 1 indicates what a P4C expedition-educator would do to scaffold a novice CI where students are unable to guide themselves, and 5 indicates what they would do to scaffold a mature CI where students have internalised the previous scaffolds and have learned to guide themselves.

As well as changing the way they scaffold student inquiry, the teacher-as-expedition-educator also adapts the role they play. When students have little idea of the process of philosophical inquiry, the expedition-educator models how to make philosophical progress. They lead the inquiry and as they make a philosophical move, they explain what they are doing and why they are doing it so students will be able to emulate them. This role is inappropriate once students understand the process of philosophical inquiry and can emulate the teacher, because leading students in this way blocks them from further developing their ability to inquire for themselves. So, as students are able to make more decisions about the path of the inquiry, but while they still lack experience, the P4C expedition-educator would act more as a coach. They set up an educative environment, and instruct, train and encourage the skills, moves and dispositions needed for productive, collaborative inquiry, for example, by setting exercises to strengthen students’ ability to make distinctions or to give and evaluate reasons. Once students have developed the knowledge they need to inquire for themselves, the expedition-educator can take more of a referee role (see Brennifer, 2007, 171) and will only intervene when the CI fails to
operate productively such as when students are not listening to each other, sticking to the point, or giving reasons. Finally as the students have taken on collective responsibility for modelling, coaching and refereeing the inquiry, the expedition-educator can co-inquire with students, one of many ‘players’ who together make progress as a ‘team’.

**Box 20: Scaffolding student inquiry**

Scaffolding a novice Community of Inquiry

1. Modelling the process of inquiry for students to emulate. The teacher chooses the path of inquiry and guides students down this path using a similar form of pedagogical action to the expedition-leader, but they also explain what they are doing and why so students can eventually learn to emulate the teacher and guide themselves. For example, the teacher might say, “first we need to ask a question. One question the story makes me ask is … I wonder about this because…”

2. Deciding the options for advancing the inquiry and then giving their students a choice about which option they will take: “We need to give a reason to back that up. One reason might be … Another reason might be … Which do you think is the best reason?”

3. Deciding that a particular move would progress the inquiry and then leaving it up to the students to decide how this move will be made: “We need to evaluate this idea. What are reasons to agree and reasons to disagree?”

4. Indicating that a new move needs to be made if they are to make progress, yet leaving it up to the students to decide which move needs to be made and how to make it: “We appear to be getting confused. What should we do now to move forward?”

Allowing students the freedom to decide when and if a new inquiry move needs to be made and what move would be appropriate to make progress.

Scaffolding an expert Community of Inquiry

**Midwife not leader**

A second way to distinguish the types of guide is according to whose agenda is being followed. The expedition-leader and tour-leader set the agenda and lead their students to follow this with no space for autonomous inquiry. In taking the role of expedition-educator, the teacher gives up controlling the inquiry, and the agenda is co-created. This does not mean substituting a student-controlled agenda for a teacher-controlled one, or making the expedition-educator subservient to their students’ wishes. This would be to effectively abandon the students, letting them do whatever they want, which is incompatible with them learning to make philosophical progress and thus also incompatible with expedition-educating. Instead, the expedition-educator gives up the leader-follower relationship and replaces it with co-inquiry. Neither teacher nor students are ‘in charge’ or ‘leading’ and neither are passive followers. They follow the inquiry together, rather than one imposing on the other.91

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91 One problem that can arise for the expedition-educator is how to handle situations where students wish to follow paths of inquiry that are unproductive, refuse the advice offered by the guide and are uncooperative in making progress. The expedition-educator cannot impose their will on their students ‘for their own good’, nor let the students do whatever they want, or they will no longer occupy the balanced position needed for expedition-educating. Some strategies they might use to keep the balance in these situations include: Letting the students follow their chosen path and become lost, and then ask them to reflect on why their chosen path did not work; The Freirean strategy of posing what students currently want to do as a problem to be inquired into so they can move to more sophisticated desires; Asking students to reflect on what they want to do, for example by asking “Why do you want to pursue this? How do you think it will help us?” The most extreme version of this problem is when students refuse to engage in inquiry at all. Resolving this requires a more nuanced and far-reaching approach than the strategies I have suggested, including consideration of the conceptions and misconceptions students have of schooling, as well as the institutional culture of their particular school context. I will not address this issue here.
When students are experienced in philosophical inquiry, co-inquiry involves the expedition-guide thinking with their students to jointly develop a line of inquiry. The teacher and students suggest possible paths forward and the community judges which they will follow (as discussed in relation to collective progress in chapter 6). Co-inquiry with inexperienced students, on the other hand, must be different. When students are too young or novice to judge what to do next in their inquiry, thinking with them about the path of the inquiry is not a viable option. Instead, to develop a co-inquiry, the expedition guide thinks about what their students would do if they had more experience. 

Put a different way, the P4C teacher-as-expedition-educator uses what Haynes and Murris call maieutic listening (2000, 23) to set an agenda and direction for their co-inquiry. They listen to their students in order to discern the problems they confront and the direction they want to travel in to resolve these, and then they partner them to ‘give birth’ to this line of inquiry. Lipman expresses it thus:

Maieutic thinking is intellectual midwifery. It is extractive, educative, seeking to elicit the best thinking possible from one’s charges…. Its success hinges upon the ability of the practitioner to understand and identify with the creative process from within. Just as the midwife empathises with both the mother and child, the voice coach empathises with the singer struggling to sing and the song struggling to be sung (2003, 252).

The tour-leader and expedition-leader do not use maieutic listening and instead they lead the inquiry without reference to student interests, concerns or judgements, and without offering students any choice. The tour-leader thrusts a pre-packaged inquiry on their students and there is no question of allowing them to create something new or give birth to their own inquiry. The expedition-leader allows a new inquiry to be born, but they do this by empathising only with the inquiry struggling to be followed, not with the community struggling to inquire. They take control and decide how they think the inquiry is unfolding and what should be done to follow it.

By using maieutic listening the P4C expedition-educator can engage in co-inquiry, even if they lack explicit input from their students about what paths to take. If students are struggling to formulate a path they want to explore, the teacher-as-midwife can judge what to do to make progress based on the problems that the students want to resolve, what has been achieved so far in the co-inquiry and the direction the inquiry seems to be moving in. They can suggest possible paths forward and ask their students if this sounds like the path they want to take, rather than deciding for the students the direction they should take. For example, if students raise the question of whether cats have minds, the P4C teacher must be careful to offer guidance about investigating and resolving the students’ philosophical problems about the mind rather than simply directing them to the mind-body problem. The students could want to explore an ethical, epistemological or a metaphysical issue different from the traditional mind-body problem, and possibly an issue that has had little or no academic philosophical attention.

For co-inquiry with very young or inexperienced students, the P4C teacher has to ‘listen between the lines’ to find out the problems the students want to explore and the paths of inquiry they want to travel. For example, inexperienced students may only be able to indicate that they like talking about being brave or friends or pets but be unable to articulate a philosophical problem. The expedition-educator’s job here is to maieutically listen for which philosophical problems underlie the student interest. They can then suggest what they take to be the problem students are interested in: “I think we are wondering about whether a rock can be a friend. Do you think a rock can be a friend?” Alternatively, they can ask a series of philosophical questions on the general topic and during the resulting discussion they maieutically listen to discover the particular problem their students want to pursue.

Co-inquiry not paternalist-guiding

the expedition-educator is able to engage in co-inquiry with their students because they use maieutic listening to create a shared agenda. They judge how they can advance the inquiry together with their

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92 See Freire (1993, 113) who raises a similar distinction between thinking for, thinking with and thinking about.
students. This is different from the paternalistic guiding of the expedition-leader and tour-leader who judge how they can advance the inquiry for their students.

Expedition-educating typically involves co-inquiry where the teacher is not separate from and imposing on the students, but participating with them in the inquiry. This is what might be called a dialogical model of guiding where the teacher-guide decides what is best for advancing the inquiry in partnership with their students rather than making authoritative decisions without consultation.

In contrast, both the tour-leader and the expedition-leader use paternalistic guiding where the teacher holds a dominant position, and decides the milestones and outcomes to be covered. Examples of such paternalistic-guiding are Socrates leading the slave boy through the steps of a geometric proof in the *Meno*, and Kingsfield grilling his students in the film *The Paper Chase* (Burbules, 1993, 89). This is paternalistic because the teacher-guide decides what is best for advancing the inquiry irrespective of the students’ wishes, and even when students could have made some of the decisions themselves.

It is through co-inquiry that the expedition-educator finds the right balance for educating for philosophical progress. They scaffold and coach student inquiry, develop an agenda in partnership with their students by using maieutic listening, and then participate in the subsequent co-inquiry. They share responsibility with their students for determining the best path forward so that together, teacher and students can engage in autonomous co-inquiry, and as a result, students learn to make progress for themselves. This should be distinguished from paternalist-guides (the tour-leader and expedition-leader) who structure the inquiry for their students in a paternalistic manner so that they can lead them through a teacher-chosen agenda. They determine the best path for making progress, but control and direct the inquiry so students do not have sufficient autonomy to learn to guide themselves.

**V. Guiding as educating for philosophical progress**

P4C students are trying to find a path of inquiry through the intellectual wilderness. But they are not left to their own devices, which would result in them getting lost, and nor are they led down a teacher-chosen path, which would prevent them from learning to make philosophical progress. Instead, their teacher is their guide who helps them navigate safely and follow their inquiry where it leads and in so doing, enables them to learn how to make progress for themselves.

Yet it is difficult for P4C teachers to guide their students without abandoning or controlling them. To balance control and autonomy, I argued that the P4C teacher should take the stance of a philosophical expedition-educator. The expedition-educator judges which pedagogical actions to take, and when, according to what will help their students to engage in autonomous inquiry and hence learn to guide themselves. The tour-leader and expedition-leader, on the other hand, merely judge which action will move the inquiry forward. The expedition-educator judges: How can I advance the inquiry together with my students? What can I do so that students learn to make progress? The expedition and tour-leader judge: How can I advance the inquiry for my students? What can I do to make progress?

In summary, the expedition-educator asks themselves the following questions in order to judge which pedagogical actions to perform, and when to perform them, so as to educate for philosophical progress:

- Am I enabling students to judge what to do to make progress, or am I telling them what to do?
- Am I partnering my students to set an agenda for the inquiry, or am I alone setting the agenda?
- Am I deciding the path of the inquiry with students or for students?
- Am I educating them to make progress for themselves or am I directing them to make progress?
- Am I enabling my students to make progress, or ensuring that the inquiry makes progress?
- Am I offering students choice about the path of the inquiry, or am I directing them?
- Do I advance the joint inquiry as it develops and advance the co-created agenda, or do I just advance the inquiry according to my own agenda?
Part 3
Resolutions
9. Philosophical progress in Philosophy for Children

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time (T.S. Eliot)

A conception of epistemic philosophical progress is vital for Philosophy for Children (P4C). Without it, neither P4C teachers nor students understand what it means to develop better philosophical ideas and conceptions, let alone how to achieve this. Yet the P4C literature does not include an adequate conception of philosophical progress, and so P4C students have no guidance in getting better philosophical ideas. This lack threatens the epistemic legitimacy of the programme, leaving P4C in danger of being nothing more than a pointless chat.

My aim in this thesis was to develop a conception of philosophical progress that would resolve this deficiency. I examined the impediments to progress in P4C which were caused by inadequate conceptions of philosophical progress. Then, using philosophical inquiry, analysis, argumentation and conceptualisation, I developed a new conception which resolves these problems, and enables P4C teachers and students to understand, make and evaluate philosophical progress. I summarise this conception in this chapter.

In the first section, I outline the main problems that I addressed, some of which emerged or were clarified during the thesis. After each problem I summarise the conceptions I developed to resolve them, as well as how I respond to some important objections. I then include a short illustration of a P4C lesson built on this conception of philosophical progress, and in the final section, I examine the wider implications of this conception.

I. Problems and resolutions

P4C teachers and students tend to hold various incongruous and inadequate conceptions that result in problems for making philosophical progress in P4C. I illustrated these problems in chapter 1, and then in each subsequent chapter I elaborated how they impede philosophical progress. In this section I summarise the seven main problems, and how I resolved them to create an efficacious conception of philosophical progress for P4C.

1. What is Philosophy for Children?

One impediment to philosophical progress occurs before ‘progress’ is even raised as an issue. P4C teachers sometimes misunderstand the praxis of P4C and so employ pedagogy that will not support philosophical inquiry or philosophical progress.

If P4C teachers adopt the conception of P4C that I describe in chapters 1 and 2, then this first problem will be resolved. P4C is a programme of philosophical education, different from academic philosophy, which sits between teacher-directed discussion and free conversation. P4C students participate in open,
but rigorous, dialogical inquiry without having to cover a pre-decided agenda of positions or arguments. This might be termed inquiry-constructivism given P4C students learn by participating in this philosophical inquiry. The pedagogical foundation of P4C is the Community of Inquiry (CI), which has three main facets: 1) a process of reflective and self-correcting philosophical inquiry; 2) a community context that emphasises common methods, thinking together and distributed cognition; and 3) a caring ethos that is collaborative, epistemologically rigorous (but not combative) and intellectually safe.

It might be possible to raise objections to the pedagogy of P4C, such as objecting to inquiry constructivism as a universal form of learning, or arguing that a CI is not the best context for all types of education. However, these sorts of objections are irrelevant to this thesis. My aim is to provide a conception of philosophical progress that is efficacious for P4C, and I do not critically examine and defend the pedagogy of P4C nor argue that it can be applied in other educational contexts.93

2. What is epistemic progress?
A second impediment to philosophical progress occurs because P4C teachers do not have a clear conception of epistemic progress. They tend to only recognise procedural progress such as improving philosophical thinking, and so they ignore the possibility of making epistemic progress by getting better conceptions.

The resolution is to introduce a clear conception of epistemic progress, which I did in chapters 1 and 2. P4C teachers need a conception of what it means to have improved, better or more refined ideas and understandings, so they can recognise when it occurs and so they can aim to achieve such progress.

3. What is epistemic philosophical progress?
The main impediment to philosophical progress is P4C teachers and students lacking an adequate conception of epistemic philosophical progress. Without such a conception they do not know what it means to move forward in their philosophical inquiry, and so are frequently confused about how to proceed and about whether they have made progress, or merely travelled in circles.

When P4C students (and teachers) do not understand what philosophical progress is, they try to engage in philosophical inquiry using inappropriate methods. For example, they might think that philosophy operates like science and then get frustrated because the issues they discuss in P4C cannot be resolved by gathering empirical evidence. Alternatively, P4C students (and teachers) might think that philosophical inquiry is like a good conversation where the only aim is to have a dialogue that ‘flows’, and then they eventually get bored and disengaged because the discussion does not go anywhere. On the other hand, students might think that P4C is the same as their other classes at school where the aim is to get the ‘correct’ answers as quickly as possible. But if they operate in P4C in this way they end up confused and discouraged because ‘correct’ answers are never reached.

There is presently no adequate conception of philosophical progress in the P4C literature with which to defuse this problem (at least partly because epistemic philosophical progress tends to be conflated with procedural progress). Although the P4C literature suggests a conception of epistemic philosophical progress in ‘following the inquiry where it leads from a problematic situation to a meaningful one’, this is not sufficient. First, this Deweyan conception could apply to any sort of inquiry, and it does not specify what is distinctive about philosophical problems, meaning and inquiry. Second, the conception implies that making progress is an expert art, but this leaves the philosophically novice P4C teachers and students without explicit and concrete guidance about how to follow an inquiry where it leads.

P4C is in need of an adequate conception of epistemic philosophical progress, yet producing such a conception is itself problematic because of the difficulty of reconciling philosophical progress with our inability to find general or lasting agreement in philosophy. There is no consensus about appropriate

93 Apart from this being irrelevant to the concerns of my thesis, these issues have been thoroughly addressed elsewhere. See the list of P4C literature from chapter 1, Box 1.
philosophical method that can be relied on to settle questions of philosophical progress and instead of established findings, there are multiple conflicting interpretations, arguments and positions, and widespread disagreement and debate. But if no one can agree in philosophy, how can there be any progress? How can we have a conception of progress that is consistent with the seemingly endless controversy involved in philosophy?

A realistic conception of epistemic philosophical progress

In order to resolve the incongruity between philosophical progress and philosophical disagreement, in chapter 4 I argued that idealistic and pessimistic conceptions of philosophical progress should be rejected in favour of realistic conceptions (and that these should not be confused with philosophical idealism or realism).

I reject idealistic positions about philosophical progress that maintain that we make progress as we (eventually) get to the truth. These are inadequate because they set standards that are impossibly and unnecessarily high, while ignoring the legitimate, achievable, epistemic products of philosophy that indicate progress. If we judge progress in an idealistic manner, because we do not have independent access to the truth, we cannot measure the distance between our current conception and the true conception, so we cannot verify if we have made progress or even if we have moved closer. This is a poor conception of progress because it makes progress unknowable while ignoring other epistemologically valuable products of philosophy that could be used to judge if we have made progress such as extensions or clarifications of theories and positions, and what Moody (1986, 45) calls a necrology of failed positions and arguments.

I also reject pessimistic conceptions of philosophical progress that maintain that there is no epistemic philosophical progress and only endless change and disagreement. These are also inadequate conceptions because they set standards for judging philosophical progress that are unreasonably and needlessly low (actually having no epistemic standards at all), while ignoring the same achievable epistemic products of philosophy that idealistic positions ignore. Pessimistic positions start with the assumption that progress could only occur by reaching the truth, but because we cannot have, or verify if we have, final philosophical truth, they draw the conclusion that therefore we cannot have anything of epistemic value, only subjective opinions. Because this ignores the achievements of philosophy that indicate progress, such as making distinctions, giving arguments and constructing positions, this is also an inadequate conception of philosophical progress.

I argue that the best conception of philosophical progress is a realistic conception that holds that we make philosophical progress by producing epistemically valuable achievements that are distinct from reaching the final ‘truth’. Such a conception employs standards for judging philosophical progress which idealistic and pessimistic positions ignore. Where idealistic positions employ only ‘true’ and ‘false’ and pessimistic positions employ only epistemically equal ‘opinions’, realistic positions employ standards such as being more coherent, in greater harmony with other conceptions and the empirical data, or having fewer fallacies or stronger logical support. These epistemically legitimate standards can be used to judge that one philosophical idea, proposition or position is better than another even though there is controversy over which is ultimately ‘true’.

One objection might be that I contradict myself because, in order to argue that idealistic and pessimistic positions are incorrect and realistic positions are correct, I have taken an idealistic position. However, such an objection would be misapplied. I do not argue that any position is correct or incorrect, but I do offer good reasons for taking realistic positions to be better than the idealistic and pessimistic alternatives. My argument is that given philosophy cannot produce settled truths, we better understand philosophical progress by ignoring ‘truth’ and instead considering the realistic achievements of philosophy, because these are the only legitimate and useful indicators of progress.

On the other hand, an objection might be that my arguments against truth as a measure of philosophical progress prove too much, and they lead to the sceptical conclusion that there is no philosophical
progress. As in the previous objection, I do not attempt to prove this sceptical position to be incorrect, yet I do have good reason for taking the realistic position to be better. This comes down to a choice between abandoning the 3000 year history of philosophy as epistemically pointless or acknowledging the realistic achievements of philosophy as progress. The second is better.

Another objection is that my position is untenable because it denies that we can say that some things are true and some things are false. However, this is also a mistaken objection. My only claim is that philosophical progress should not be measured by the standard of truth, or in other words, that truth is not a serviceable criterion for philosophical progress. I do not claim that there is no truth or falsity. I do not claim that there is no such thing as a philosophical truth. My only claim is that if there are such truths, then they are irrelevant to understanding and measuring philosophical progress. At the best, truth is a superfluous criterion, because the work of measuring progress is actually done by such criterion as consensus with the expert community. At worst, truth obscures the useful criteria. As I argued in chapter 7, when P4C students aim for the truth, they ignore the progress that is possible by making reasoned judgements, asking questions, and getting more adequate and congruent conceptions.

A similar objection is that truth functions as a necessary regulatory ideal for philosophical inquiry, so it cannot be ignored. In reply, I argue that improving philosophical conceptions (or as I argue later, resolving philosophical problems) is a better regulatory ideal, and a better goal for philosophical inquiry, and it makes better sense of the philosophical enterprise. The quest for better conceptions, like the quest for truth, can be used to motivate inquiry and to distinguish the philosopher from the mere sophist, but unlike the quest for truth, only the quest for better conceptions provides a useful standard for measuring progress in philosophical inquiry.

A further version of this objection is that we cannot understand philosophical disagreement without a conception of truth. In order to discuss a topic we have to assume that there is a truth that is the common subject of our discussion. For example, when I argue that the mind is non-physical and you argue that it is physical, we must both assume that there is a truth of the matter, as this is a necessary precondition for our disagreement and inquiry.

My reply is that this objection confuses what philosophers have assumed they were doing with a statement of what they must be doing. Both parties in a philosophical disagreement might assume that there is a truth of the matter, yet it is not necessary to understand philosophical disagreement in this way, as shown by the following example. If I claim that realism is the best position and you claim idealism, relativism, anti-realism or even scepticism is the best position, we are not disagreeing about what is the truth of the matter, as one of the things we are disagreeing about is whether there can be such a thing as a ‘truth of the matter’. This example is better understood as a dispute about the best conception to hold, and truth is not the appropriate standard with which to mediate this dispute. In line with my arguments above, we are better to understand all philosophical disagreement in this way. I argue that we have a better understanding of philosophical debate if we reframe what is going on as the pursuit of better conceptions, all things considered, without reference to the truth.

It might also be objected that the only valid epistemic criterion is truth, so if realistic criteria do not appeal to truth then they cannot be epistemically valid. The objection is that epistemic criteria are valid only to the extent that they approximate to the truth – for example, the simpler, more justified explanation that leads to greater predictive success is only epistemically preferable because it is more likely to be true. But under the realistic position I advocate, truth is not a consideration, so there is no epistemic foundation for any realistic criteria I might propose.

My reply is that it is a mistake to make truth the sole epistemic criterion. Truth is perhaps a necessary criterion for judging if we have certainty, or if we have Settled an issue. But to understand epistemic philosophical progress we are better to consider the relation ‘epistemically better than’ rather than ‘epistemically Settled’. The valid epistemic criterion for one conception to be epistemically better than another are different from those needed to Settle an issue. For example, I argue later that a philosophical conception can be epistemically better than another if it resolves a problem that exists in the other
conception. In other words, a congruous, adequate conception is an epistemic advance over a previously incongruous or inadequate conception, irrespective of the question of truth.

A final objection might be that my position about truth leads to the denial that truth is an important philosophical issue. This is also a mistaken objection as I do not argue that there are not genuine philosophical problems about ‘truth’, or that we should not investigate and construct new conceptions to resolve these problems. My only claim is that we best resolve the philosophical problems about philosophical progress by removing truth from our consideration.

**The problem-resolution conception of philosophy**

In chapter 4 I argued that the problem-resolution conception of philosophy provides a realistic conception of epistemic philosophical progress that is compatible with the controversial nature of philosophy. There is philosophical progress every time a warranted, defensible position is developed that resolves a philosophical problem. This is progress even though there are other options and even though it is a tentative position, liable to be revised, refined or rejected in the future. I expand on the problem-resolution conception in the remainder of this sub-section before elaborating how it provides a sound conception of philosophical progress in the next sub-section.

Philosophical problems arise when we conceptualise the world and find that these conceptions are incongruent or inadequate. Such problems are unSettleable (with a capital ‘S’) because the problem remains even after we gather all the empirical information or established knowledge and they cannot be given a final uncontroversial, unique resolution. Philosophical methods and approaches can be used to resolve these problems but they do not settle them because either their application leads to multiple, defensible and contrary philosophical resolutions, or the methods and approaches themselves cannot be accepted as the uncontroversially best and only way to resolve philosophical problems.

We resolve philosophical problems by creating new ways to look at, and be in, the world, within which the original problem no longer occurs. To put it another way, we resolve philosophical problems by creating a newly congruent and adequate conception to replace the incongruous and inadequate conception. But, to take a lesson from Quine’s holism, there will always be multiple defensible or warranted ways to achieve such a conception and so multiple resolutions are always available.

Similarly, philosophical resolution is not a final state where all doubts are dispelled, all questions answered or all lines of inquiry exhausted, because every resolution contains the seeds of new progress. Every philosophical resolution not only dissolves the original problem and moves us forward, but it also raises new problems and thus indicates further possible progress.

To be warranted as a resolution, the new conception must ‘work’ objectively so that the problem no longer has force, or disappears. This means a resolution is warranted only if it works within rational constraints independent of our subjective preferences, and we must test our conceptions intersubjectively against logic, experience and established conceptions before we are warranted to assert them as resolutions to our problems. If a conception is inadequate to account for, or incongruous with, these external considerations, it fails to count as a resolution (even if we believe it does resolve the problem). Putting it colloquially, these extra-mental considerations keep our resolutions honest.

Expressed another way, a resolution must be in greater ‘wide reflective equilibrium’ with our intersubjectively-accepted reasoned judgements about the world than the problematic conception it replaces. We do not resolve problems by reaching ideal reflective equilibrium (which would be impossible to reach or verify as Truth), but by moving to conceptions that are in greater reflective equilibrium than alternatives. In particular we judge that a problematic conception is out of equilibrium and a resolution is more in equilibrium when that problem is removed.

Some of what I write might suggest that I am really just a realist, or a coherentist. However, it is a mistake to consider either one as the sum of my position, as I reject extreme versions of both, and instead strive for a balance between them. A resolution is not a conception that corresponds with or copies the external world, nor is it merely an internally-coherent subjective conception. It is a
conception that is consistent with our objective knowledge, and is subjectively coherent. Put another way, it is a conception that is efficacious in relation to the world and our subjective conceptions. So, even though a resolution is not a final settled conclusion, nor does it merely have subjective warrant. Rather it is a settlement (small ‘s’) of a problem in the Deweyan sense of a fallible, revisable conclusion we are objectively warranted to use for further inquiry.

**A new conception of epistemic philosophical progress**

Based on the problem-resolution conception of philosophy, we make epistemic philosophical progress by transforming incongruous and inadequate conceptions into congruent and adequate conceptions that are back in reflective equilibrium again. Resolving a philosophical problem is an epistemic advancement from previously incongruous and inadequate conceptions, but it is also compatible with the plurality of competing philosophical positions, because there are always several epistemically legitimate ways to resolve a philosophical problem, and none of them provide a final settlement.

Philosophical progress occurs dialectically - we resolve problems, only for the resolutions to become the source of new problems. The original problem arises as an incongruous, inadequate conception and we resolve this problem by developing more congruous and adequate conceptions. However, more advanced problems arise in the new conception. In response we might develop yet more congruous and adequate resolutions. Alternatively we might abandon a line of resolution that we judge to be fundamentally in error, or develop radical resolutions that were not previously available. Although we may return to the same sorts of problems and lines of resolution, we are making philosophical progress rather than merely going around in circles or following philosophical fads, because we develop more and more adequate and congruous conceptions and more and more sophisticated problems.

An objection might be that not all philosophical progress can be understood as intentionally moving from philosophical problem to resolution. For example, we sometimes make philosophical progress by having an unexpected insight, or by exploring the intellectual terrain. In reply, I argue that the problem-resolution conception is also consistent with these ways of making progress. We can unexpectedly discover resolutions to problems we were not intending to resolve, and resolve our problems by exploring the intellectual terrain and ‘getting the lie of the land’ rather than by moving somewhere new.

A second objection might be that the problem-resolution conception does not represent every philosophical practice, and so it cannot be an adequate conception of all philosophical progress. For example, not all philosophy is about problems, and some philosophical problems should be understood but not resolved. My reply is that any topic addressed by a philosophical practice can be understood as a philosophical problem, and any outcome sought can be understood as a philosophical resolution:

- In Hegelian philosophy the problem is the clash of a thesis and antithesis and the resolution is a new synthesis.
- For Wittgensteinian philosophy the problem is an illness of our language and we resolve (or cure) this by avoiding inappropriate use of language, or alternatively, the problem is not knowing our way, and the resolution is being able to navigate anew.
- In contemporary philosophy we can resolve philosophical problems by identifying the problematic conception which we then eliminate, reduce to unproblematic conceptions, or use only instrumentally. Alternatively we can resolve these problems by coining new concepts, or simply by ceasing theorisation.
- For Descartes the philosophical problem was whether we can trust any of our knowledge, and the resolution was the foundationalism of the *Cogito*.
- One of Mill’s problems was an inadequate conception of the legitimate basis for political interference, and the resolution was the harm principle.
- For Frege the problem was how ‘the evening star = the evening star’ could be trivially true, when the ‘evening star = the morning star’ is not, and the resolution is the sense-reference distinction.
The problem-resolution conception even fits philosophical practices whose aim is to understand and live with philosophical problems: We resolve problems by changing our apprehension of them so we understand how they are incongruous and inadequate without this being problematic. Even if it turns out that some philosophical practices are not covered by the problem-resolution conception (and I cannot prove that this is not the case), the problem-resolution conception is still an efficacious conception of philosophical progress for P4C. It enables P4C students and teachers to understand what epistemic philosophical progress is, how it is different from other sorts of progress, and how to make and judge their own progress (as I discuss in the next sections).

4. What is philosophical progress in the open inquiry of P4C?

A further element of the problem of philosophical progress for P4C is the lack of understanding of epistemic philosophical progress in the context of P4C. How can P4C students make progress in the context of the caring and collaborative dialogue in a CI, where there is philosophically rigorous, genuine co-inquiry involving teacher and students, and where no-one knows where the inquiry will end up? How do we know we are making progress when we do not have a pre-determined resolution to aim for and judge progress against, and instead follow the inquiry where it leads?

A conception of epistemic philosophical progress for P4C

The conception of epistemic philosophical progress from the problem-resolution conception is also efficacious for P4C. As I argued in chapter 4, the problem-resolution conception enables P4C students to understand, play by the rules, and score goals in philosophical inquiry. The aim is to uncover and resolve philosophical problems and we keep track of our progress by measuring how close we are to achieving this aim. Students can thus make progress by explicitly identifying a problem, suggesting possible resolutions and then critically analysing whether these suggestions resolve the problems or not.

In particular, the problem-resolution conception elaborates what it means to follow the inquiry where it leads, and how we judge we are on track. We start with an incongruous or inadequate conception and then move to a resolution of this problem. We know we are on track by referencing the problem we start with and considering whether what is being said brings us closer to a resolution. We know we have followed the inquiry where it leads because the philosophical problem we started with no longer occurs.

5. How can students make and judge philosophical progress in P4C?

A further problem that impedes philosophical progress in P4C is the practical difficulties that students have in making and judging philosophical progress. Even if they understand that their aim is to resolve philosophical problems, P4C students find it difficult to pick out and articulate issues that they experience as philosophical problems, which impedes them from making progress resolving them. They also have difficulty navigating the complex, often chaotic, path from problem to resolution, especially in the collaborative dialogue of P4C where multiple directions are suggested. They do not know what to do next to make progress and find themselves unable to judge if they have made progress.

Philosophical questions and philosophical inquiry

In chapter 5 I argued that philosophical questions should be employed by P4C students as useful tools for identifying, articulating and resolving philosophical problems. Nevertheless, student attention should be on the underlying problem, not on the questions, or they may fail to make progress because they address a question with no problem in mind, because they have empirical rather than philosophical problems in mind, or because they have do not have one clear problem in mind.

I also argued in chapter 6 that the praxis of P4C should include a framework for inquiry that provides philosophical navigation advice that P4C students can use to judge what to do to make philosophical progress after they have articulated a problem. This framework would have four components:

1. A plan for philosophical inquiry, broken into a sequence of manageable steps which reliably lead from problem to resolution (see Box 12).
Philosophical moves to be made for each step in the inquiry (see Box 13).

Philosophical milestones, or the products of each stage in the inquiry, which are indicators of philosophical progress even when we have not reached a resolution (see Box 14).

Questions to prompt the moves to be made and the milestones to be produced (see Box 15).

Because philosophical inquiry is complex and seemingly chaotic, the stages of inquiry provide a valuable heuristic that teachers and students can reference to get their bearings; as a propaedeutic device to help novices to master philosophical inquiry; and thus as a pedagogical device to help P4C students learn to make philosophical progress. Novice students initially use the framework in a simple mechanistic and linear fashion. As they develop mastery, their inquiry will become more spontaneous and playful, and less linear, though the framework can still be used to get their bearings when lost.

I do not claim that everything that happens in a P4C dialogue will be planned from this framework. As Burbules points out, “any actual conversation will contain repetitions, discontinuities, irrelevancies, non sequiturs, and redundancies that may be, strictly speaking, irrelevant or unnecessary for the topic under discussion, but have much to do with creating and maintaining the fabric of the communicative relation” (1993, 108). Nevertheless, consciously attending to the stages and moves of inquiry is necessary to enable novice students to make and learn to make progress.

P4C teachers and students can use this framework to judge how far they have come in the inquiry and what has been accomplished (“We have suggested three possible resolutions and reasons for and against them”). Then, they can judge which stage of inquiry to advance to, and which moves they should make to advance them to this stage (“Next we need to evaluate which of the suggested resolutions is best”). They can ask for and encourage these moves and milestones by asking prompt questions (“Why do you think that resolution is best?”). At first the P4C teacher would suggest moves, identify milestones and ask prompt questions, but they do this so that eventually this responsibility will be distributed across the whole group and the students can use the framework to guide their own philosophical progress.

A possible objection to the framework of inquiry, and also to other aspects of the conception of philosophical progress that I offer, is that it is too sophisticated for most young students to grasp, and so not fitting for P4C. Conversely, another possible objection is that the framework is too superficial because it does not address all the philosophical complexities.

My reply is that these objections are based on a misunderstanding of the pragmatist bricolage purpose for the conception of philosophical progress for P4C (as described in chapter 1). I will elucidate this purpose in order to elaborate my reply.

The conception of philosophical progress is designed to be sufficiently adequate and congruent so it resolves the problems of philosophical progress in P4C, but not so complex that it becomes unwieldy and poorly suited for employment in P4C. The conception is designed to resolve two kinds of problem, the first is the lack of an overall conception of philosophical progress in P4C, and the second is how to enable novice students to make progress and learn to make progress.

To resolve these two kinds of problem I need two different kinds of conceptions:

1. Aspirational conceptions, such as the problem-resolution conception, that are sophisticated enough to resolve philosophical problems about philosophical progress, and which if adopted, will enable P4C teachers and students to understand, make and evaluate philosophical progress.

2. Pedagogical conceptions, such as the framework of philosophical inquiry, that approximate the aspirational conceptions, but which are simple enough to scaffold novice students so they can make philosophical progress, and learn to master the aspirational conceptions.\textsuperscript{94}

\textsuperscript{94} Note that there is no sharp distinction between these two types of conception. Pedagogical conceptions are intended to approximate the aspirational conceptions, but they also shape our understanding of them. Aspirational conceptions are intended to be efficacious in the context of an educational programme, and so would appear to be pedagogical conceptions from the perspective of theoretical researchers.
The aspirational conceptions will be too sophisticated for novice P4C students. But this is no objection, as they were never meant to be fully understood by students when they start P4C, any more than students are expected to understand the full nature of mathematics when they begin to add. Even if young students do not understand mathematics, their teacher does, and he/she provides scaffolding so the students can add, subtract and multiply. Likewise, even when P4C students do not yet understand philosophical progress, their teacher provides scaffolding so they can make progress by identifying and resolving philosophical problems.

The pedagogical conceptions, on the other hand, are to be employed by novice P4C students to scaffold their philosophical progress. These are unsophisticated in comparison with the conceptions an experienced academic philosopher might hold. But this is no objection as these conceptions must be simple in order to be employed in a useful manner by young and inexperienced students.

The version of the framework for inquiry that I present is a pedagogical conception, aimed at an experienced group of P4C students. It is thus too sophisticated for the youngest and most novice students, who need a simpler version, but it is also too simple for academic philosophical research. However, within the constraints of this thesis I cannot provide several different versions of this framework which would be fitting for students at different levels of experience, so I have only presented an example that is fitting for students of a moderate level of experience and maturity.

P4C teachers should organise P4C sessions according to the aspirational conceptions, because this enables them to avoid many of the impediments to philosophical progress in P4C. For example, they should make sure their sessions address problems that students experience as philosophically problematic, and they should assist them to resolve these problems.

If P4C teachers only hold pedagogical conceptions, without grasping the aspirational conceptions, then they will not be able to organise a CI so that it makes philosophical progress nor assist students to learn to make philosophical progress. For example, describing philosophical questions as ‘fat questions’ is a useful pedagogical conception for 5 year olds. Yet if this is the full extent of a teacher’s conception of philosophical questions and problems, and they do not have the aspirational conception of philosophical problems and questions as tools for articulating these problems, then they will be unable to facilitate philosophical progress. Likewise, if students do not develop the aspirational conceptions, and remain attached to the simple pedagogical conceptions, they will not learn to independently make progress.

In summary, the objection that the conceptions I present are too simple or too complex misses the point of these conceptions. An efficacious conception of philosophical progress for P4C needs conceptions of philosophical progress at different levels of complexity to serve aspirational and pedagogical purposes.

Judging philosophical progress in P4C

In chapters 4 and 6 I also argued that the problem-resolution conception and the framework of philosophical inquiry provide clear, objective, aspirational criteria by which to judge whether philosophical progress has been made. During inquiry and before we have resolved our problem we can judge progress by asking: Have we reached philosophical milestones? Have we moved further through the stages of philosophical inquiry? When we produce a possible resolution, we can judge progress by asking: Does our new conception resolve the problem involved in the old conception? Does our new conception resolve more of the currently identified problems, and open up more new and fruitful lines of inquiry, than alternative conceptions? Is the new conception in greater reflective equilibrium with our total set of settled rational considerations?

However, judging whether we have resolved a problem, and which philosophical resolution is better than others (i.e. in greater reflective equilibrium) is extremely complex and requires expert judgement. As I argued in chapter 4, students need scaffolding to help them to master this complex practice, which can be provided by a pedagogical conception involving simpler criteria that roughly approximate the aspirational standard of reflective equilibrium (see Box 9). These criteria can be used as heuristics for judging that one conception or resolution is better than another without having to directly make the
expert judgement about which is in greater reflective equilibrium. Although reflective equilibrium is the primary epistemic value, the simpler epistemic criteria are valid because conceptions that meet them are more likely to be in reflective equilibrium. In general, we are more likely to remove inadequacy and incongruity in our conceptions, and thus move to reflective equilibrium, by getting more accurate, deeper, ordered, and reasoned conceptions.

6. What position about epistemic progress should P4C students & teachers adopt?

The problems that P4C faces in relation to philosophical progress can also be attributed (at least partially) to underdeveloped personal epistemic positions or misconceptions about the whole enterprise of making epistemic progress. Sometimes students (and teachers) take simplistic epistemic positions that prevent them from understanding philosophical progress and playing the game of philosophical inquiry. If they take a simplistic relativist position, such as resolving a problem is a matter of opinion, then they think that all conceptions are equally good and they cannot conceive of one conception being better than another. This means they cannot understand what it means to resolve a philosophical problem by getting a better conception. If they take a simplistic absolutist position, such as philosophical resolutions are either right or wrong, they can only conceive of better resolutions as ‘the right answer’. This means they also cannot understand how reaching a philosophical resolution could be progress, given it is not a final, Settled, right answer.

**Personal epistemic positions and philosophical progress**

To resolve the problems caused when P4C students take unsophisticated absolutist or relativist positions, I argued in chapter 7 that P4C students (and teachers) should instead take the epistemic position of reasoned evaluationism, because only this position has the epistemic resources for making judgements of philosophical progress. From this position, philosophical resolutions are not mere opinions, but nor can they be categorised as ‘right’ or ‘wrong’. Instead they are inter-subjective reflective judgements that are better or worse depending on how well reasoned or defensible they are. From this position P4C students are able to judge that some philosophical conceptions are better than others (which unsophisticated relativists cannot do), without appealing to absolute right and wrong (which unsophisticated absolutists cannot do).

An objection that might be made here (and possibly against other aspects of the problem-resolution conception of philosophy) is that I am setting up a straw man. I have not shown that absolutism and relativism should be rejected, because I have only argued against overly simplistic versions of these positions, and have said nothing about the sensible versions that philosophers have actually adopted. My reply is that this objection is based on a misunderstanding of my project in this thesis. The relativism and absolutism that I argue against are the personal positions that empirical studies have shown are taken by P4C students and teachers, and they are not straw men that stand in for more sophisticated positions. I argue that these muddled and unsophisticated personal positions impede philosophical progress in P4C because their only epistemic categories (‘right’, ‘wrong’ and ‘mere opinion’) are not sophisticated enough to support philosophical progress. I am not arguing that any epistemic theory which appeals to truth or relativism should be rejected. Many theories developed by philosophers have a range of sophisticated epistemic resources available and, despite superficial similarities with unsophisticated absolutism and relativism (as I have described them), they count as what I have called reasoned evaluationism and could provide a useful epistemic position for P4C.

7. How can the P4C teacher balance freedom & control when educating for philosophical progress?

The last main problem I consider is the practical difficulty P4C teachers have in educating for philosophical progress. Even when they have a clear theoretical understanding of P4C, in practice they tend to either abandon students or control them, both of which impede students from learning to make philosophical progress. In attempting to keep to the pedagogy of P4C, the teacher might avoid intervening so that their students have the freedom to follow the inquiry where it leads. But as a result
the philosophical inquiry ends up as a shallow exchange of opinions without critical examination or evaluation, and students do not make progress, let alone learn to make progress. However, once the P4C teacher realises that without teacher intervention their students will not learn to make progress, they start intervening again. The problem now is that their interventions tend to control the inquiry. There is ‘progress’ but the teacher is in charge, directing students to outcomes and milestones, and impeding their students from learning to make progress for themselves. The tension is thus between allowing their students autonomy at the expense of progress, or enforcing progress at the expense of their students learning to make progress. Because the only pedagogical actions available to the P4C teacher seem to be intervening or not intervening, the temptation to move towards one or the other of these extremes creates a constant tension for the P4C teacher.

The P4C Teacher as philosophical expedition-educator

To resolve this problem and provide the last element of a conception of philosophical progress for P4C, I argued that P4C teachers need a practical stance they can take which enables them to find the balance between giving their students too much freedom and too little. Finding this balance is necessary so that P4C students can learn to make philosophical progress while participating in autonomous philosophical inquiry. In chapter 8 I argued that the best stance for the P4C teacher is that of the expedition-educator, because it gives them a heuristic for judging which pedagogical actions to take, and when, according to what will help their students to engage in autonomous inquiry and hence learn to guide themselves.

Illustration of philosophical progress in P4C

In this sub-section I illustrate how I have resolved the problems of philosophical progress for P4C. I show how P4C students can make philosophical progress when the dialogical inquiry involved is organised according to the aspirational conceptions of philosophical progress, and when P4C students employ the pedagogical conceptions. Further illustrations could be given of how P4C students of different ages and levels of experience can make philosophical progress, yet for the sake of this thesis, this short, suggestive illustration of a mature and experienced Community of Inquiry will suffice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 21: Illustration of philosophical progress in P4C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this illustration, unlike the illustration of the problems from chapter 1, students deliberately make epistemic philosophical progress in co-inquiry with their teacher, who acts as their expedition-educator. They clearly articulate their philosophical problems, such as student 2 indicating their main problem and student 7, the subsidiary problem they are addressing. They then attempt to resolve these problems by philosophical exploration rather than by gathering empirical evidence or talking to an expert. They understand the framework of philosophical inquiry and refer to it to help keep on track and moving forward, and to identify milestones that indicate philosophical progress on the path to the overall goal of a resolution to their problem. For example, student 8 identifies what has been achieved in the inquiry and what they need to do next to make further progress. Students evaluate suggested resolutions to see which best meets the criteria for judging progress, and they improve resolutions that do not measure up. In this case, student 7 judged which resolution accommodates the broader range of important rational considerations, and then student 5 modified the suggested resolution to make it even broader. Overall, they make philosophical progress by developing new conceptions of racism that are in greater reflective equilibrium in comparison with the inadequate conception of racism they started with, and this is a milestone towards resolving their primary problem of whether racism is always bad.

Because the P4C teacher intervenes so infrequently in this illustration, it might seem that they have an overly limited role to play in making philosophical progress. Their role might seem to be merely to avoid predetermining the direction, milestones or outcomes of the inquiry. On the other hand, based on earlier examples, such as when the P4C teacher organises the discussion so it follows the stages set out in the framework for inquiry, it could be thought that the teacher has an overly extensive role. In other words, it might be objected that some of the examples, contrary to what I argue, show the P4C teacher abandoning their students, and others show the teacher controlling them.

My reply is that these objections fail to take into account the function of the teachers’ actions, the educational efficacy of non-intervention, or the process of learning and development that has preceded the examples. The pedagogical actions of the P4C teacher, in line with the stance of the expedition-educator, function to guide students so they make progress together, and as a result, learn to make philosophical progress for themselves. Sometimes intervening best serves this function. For example, if students do not yet understand how to make progress in an inquiry, the P4C teacher might frequently ask questions to prompt them to follow the framework of inquiry. In other circumstances, non-intervention is more efficacious for serving this function. For example, in the above illustration the teacher rarely intervene because they know that their students understand how to inquire and make progress and they now need the opportunity to practise. Because the students have participated for some time in an educative Community of Inquiry established by their P4C teacher, they already understand that their aim is to identify incongruous and inadequate conceptions and then to resolve these philosophical problems. They also understand that to do this they need to take an epistemic position of reasoned evaluationism where they seek the better reasoned resolution, and they know to avoid trying to find the ‘right’ answer or treating the inquiry as a ‘chat’ where they merely swap opinions. In this situation, non-intervention is the most effective pedagogical action for the expedition-educator, as it gives students a chance to practise making progress for themselves.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student 5</th>
<th>Maybe we can make it broader by saying ‘Racism is when we treat people differently, or think about them differently, because of their race’?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student 2</td>
<td>I like that. This even covers my suggestion about defining someone by their race, which is either an action or a way of thinking about people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Does this give us a definition of racism that we can use as our working definition? Are you happy that we use this to think about our main problem of whether racism is always bad?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>General agreement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student 9</td>
<td>We reckoned that only allowing Indigenous actors to play Indigenous characters in a movie is OK, but does it count as racist under our definition?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What conception of epistemic philosophical progress is efficacious for P4C?

In summary, what conception of philosophical progress will resolve the problems and deal with the threats to the epistemic legitimacy of P4C? Philosophical progress in P4C should be conceived of as the movement from philosophical problems to philosophical resolutions, or in other words, from incongruous and inadequate conceptions to transformed conceptions which are now congruous and adequate. P4C students make philosophical progress by resolving philosophical problems, which is different from getting ‘right’ or ‘correct’ solutions or merely swapping opinions. They know they have made progress because they have better conceptions that are in greater reflective equilibrium in comparison with the incongruous and inadequate conceptions they started with and in comparison with alternative resolutions. To set them on a productive path, P4C students start by articulating their philosophical problems as philosophical questions. To help them to keep their bearings, and to identify milestones that indicate progress on the path from problem to resolution, they can reference the stages from the framework of philosophical inquiry. The P4C teacher can educate for philosophical progress, enabling their students to make and judge philosophical progress, by operating as a guide, and more specifically, an expedition-educator, guiding students to make philosophical progress as the means for them to learn to make progress.

By employing this conception P4C students can understand what philosophical progress is and how to achieve it, though making philosophical progress is still a complex and difficult endeavour. They can see when they are on track and when they have moved forward, even if they have not yet resolved their problems, and they have tools to support them and scaffold their ability to make philosophical progress.

Although I argue that this is an efficacious conception of philosophical progress for P4C, one which resolves significant problems in the praxis of P4C, I do not put it forward as the definitive conception. Rather, it is a better conception of philosophical progress in P4C than any current options. My recommendation is that this conception (or a better one if it is developed) become a core feature of P4C, and that it be used as the stimulus for further dialogue on this important issue in P4C and more broadly.

II. Broader implications and further research

Although my focus has been on the praxis of P4C, the conception of epistemic philosophical progress that I developed, and the constructs I used to develop this conception, have broader implications. The conception of epistemic philosophical progress can be directly applied to illuminate areas of education and research which, similar to P4C, are characterised by disagreement and controversy rather than Settled answers. Even where the conception is not directly applicable, the construct of epistemic progress that I used to develop this conception can be useful. In particular, a realistic analysis of the problems, resolutions and milestones involved in different educational and research contexts is likely to be just as productive as it was for understanding and enhancing P4C. In this section, I sketch some important, but still tentative, implications of the conception of epistemic philosophical progress and the construct of epistemic progress, and also indicate further research and lines of inquiry to be pursued.

Educational contexts without final, Settled answers

The conception of epistemic philosophical progress can be directly applied to any area of education where multiple perspectives and resolutions are on offer, and where black and white standards of ‘correct’ and ‘incorrect’ are not applicable. This would include: the interpretation and critical judgement involved in the humanities, arts and literature; social, moral, ethical and values education; interdisciplinary subjects where multiple disciplines, perspectives and standards need to be integrated; dialogical education, especially when it involves dialogue across difference; as well as educational areas that investigate the philosophical assumptions and underpinnings of different subjects such as the ‘theory of knowledge’ in the International Baccalaureate. In such educational contexts, lack of a conception of epistemic progress will lead to the same sorts of problems that P4C faces: students will not understand the nature or goal of the educational enterprise. In these areas progress is best
understood in the same way I have described philosophical progress: moving from problems to resolutions, following a framework of inquiry and reaching milestones along the way, and founded on the personal epistemic position of reasoned evaluationism.

**Thinking education**

Similarly, the conception of epistemic philosophical progress is also directly applicable to any educational praxis where thinking is central to learning. Such theories of ‘thinking education’ include: 1) education for thinking where improved thinking and thinkers is an essential educational outcome, such as the thinking processes in the Victorian Education Learning Standards (VCAA, 2005); and 2) reflective education where thinking is a necessary means to learning and understanding, such as constructivism and inquiry learning.

Thinking education faces the same sort of problem that P4C faced due to inadequate conceptions of epistemic progress. In particular, thinking education will seem pointless as long as education is understood as having the simplistic epistemic aim of ‘getting the right answers’, or ‘sharing your opinions’ (which I termed idealistic and pessimistic conceptions of epistemic progress in chapter 4 and absolutist and relativist epistemic positions in chapter 7). If the aim is to ‘get the facts and the answers’, then given the vast amount of human knowledge, and the constraints of a crowded curriculum, the most valuable means of education is by offering the knowledge directly to students rather than wasting their time with thinking. Alternatively, if the aim is just to give your opinion, there is also no point in thinking. Whatever opinion you have is acceptable, so why bother thinking? In summary, if students do not have a sophisticated conception of epistemic progress, they see no point to thinking education.

The conception of epistemic progress can be used to resolve this problem because it provides a sophisticated realistic/reasoned-evaluationist conception of epistemic progress by thinking which can replace students’ (and teachers’) limited absolutist/idealistic and relativist/pessimistic conceptions. From this new conception the epistemic aim of education is to make reasoned judgements (sometimes called deep understanding), which goes beyond merely sharing opinions or getting the right answer, and which requires rigorous thinking. This new conception of thinking progress validates the epistemic and educational legitimacy of thinking education. Students and teachers can now understand that they can make progress by thinking when they make reasoned judgements, or reach milestones on the path to constructing their reasoned judgements.

This new conception of thinking progress also informs the pedagogical role of a ‘thinking teacher’. The thinking teacher would take a thought-encouraging and thinking-educating approach as well as the stance of an expedition-educator. Rather than leading students to cover the content pre-decided by the teacher or the curriculum, their aim is to set up their classes as a community of thinkers where their students can engage in thinking and learn to think for themselves.

**A theory of education: making sense**

An overall theory of epistemic learning might also be developed from the conceptions of epistemic progress and progress by thinking. Under such a theory, which I only outline as a possibility, the epistemic aim of learning is to make sense rather than to acquire and accumulate knowledge, facts, information, or truths. From this perspective, learning is a process by which a learner’s inadequate or incongruous conceptions are transformed so they are congruous and adequate. This means learning is a dialectical process of moving from problem to resolution. We start learning with our pre-existing conceptions (scientific, artistic, historical or otherwise), then we discover problems with these conceptions, and develop more sophisticated conceptions to resolve these problems. Further learning occurs as we discover more sophisticated problems, which require the development of more sophisticated conceptions.

95 There are also be other important social, aesthetic and environmental learning aims, but I will only consider the epistemic aim of learning here.
The implication of this theory is that the ‘game’ of learning and education is different to the ‘game’ of seeking the truth. As I argued in chapter 4, when I compared resolving philosophical problems with finding the truth, there are similarities between these games as there are between Australian Rules, Rugby, and American football, but they are different games with different rules, methods of play and most importantly, ways of scoring. We can play the education game of making sense without paying attention to truth, which is only relevant in other games. To make sense, students construct or understand theories, interpretations, explanations, metaphors or descriptions that prove insightful and enable them to resolve inadequacies and incongruities in their conceptions, or in other words, put all their various conceptions in greater reflective equilibrium (in the pragmatist sense I discussed in chapter 4). For example, 12-year-olds might learn a simplified view of science because this enables them to better conceptualise the world at their current level of understanding, but as they get older, they discover problems with this simplified view and reject it in favour of more sophisticated conceptions. Asking whether the simplified science we teach 12-year-olds (or 16-year olds, or second year tertiary students) is ‘true’ seems to be making a category error. The science they learn at any point in time enables students to develop more and more sophisticated conceptions, which enables them to more and more make sense of and act successfully in the world, and the question of truth or falsity is irrelevant to this endeavour (though I have to stress that this does not mean that anything goes in education, as this would be to resort to a radical relativism. The new conceptions students develop have to enable them to make sense of the world in the objective sense described in chapter 4, and such things as wishful thinking, or conceptions based on logical error, will not serve this aim).

This may not be the radical revision of education and learning that it appears to be. If we really thought education was about teaching the truth (assuming there is such a thing), we would have to teach content that was far beyond the comprehension of most of our students. But this is not what we do. We simplify, and use metaphors, pictures and games, because what we are really interested in is student understanding, or making sense, rather than truth.

**Research contexts without final Settled answers**

As well as educational applications and implications, the conception of philosophical progress I have developed could also be directly applied to areas of research which involve a high degree of disagreement and controversy and no final Settled answers. Obviously this would be informative for philosophy, but it is also directly relevant to interdisciplinary research that falls across a number of different paradigms and standards, where there are no shared or agreed-upon standards, and where there is disagreement about which standards to apply. The epistemic progress in these cases can be informed by the conception of epistemic philosophical progress I have presented.

Of particular relevance to this thesis, given its educational and philosophical context, is the implications for philosophy of education. A conception of epistemic philosophical progress is, I argue, essential for educators and policymakers to see the value of philosophy of education. Without an understanding of how philosophy can enable us to make progress with educational praxis, curriculum and policy, philosophy of education appears pointless, forcing us to rely instead on empirical research, the ‘data’ or ‘the market’ for direction.

**Epistemic progress as a construct for understanding research and the disciplines**

Epistemic progress, or the epistemic (rather than historical or psychological) improvement of conceptions, ideas, theories, knowledge and other products, is a useful construct for understanding and comparing the disciplines, domains of human understanding and forms of inquiry. Even though the conception of epistemic philosophical progress is not directly applicable to many disciplines because they are more Settled than philosophy or interdisciplinary research, any area of research, inquiry or human understanding can be illuminated by application of the construct of epistemic progress. For any area of research or discipline it is fruitful to ask:

- What sort of problem is addressed?
• What is the appropriate resolution for this sort of problem?
• What methods are used to resolve these problems?
• What is the process of inquiry, including the stages and the moves made in each stage?
• What are the milestones on the path to a resolution that indicate progress?

Although ‘knowledge’ is the most common construct used to examine the epistemology of different disciplines, ‘progress’ has several advantages over knowledge. 1) The knowledge involved in the different disciplines has already been well studied, such as in the forms of knowledge literature (Hirst, 1974; Hirst & Peters, 1970; Phenix, 1964a, 1964b) as well as in Biglan (1973), Becher (1989), and Trowler (2006). 2) Progress is more versatile for comparing disciplines. For example both philosophy and fine arts could be said to progress, but neither can be comfortably said to produce ‘knowledge’. 3) Knowledge indicates only the final result of epistemic progress, but a broader consideration of the problems, resolutions and milestones in the different disciplines enables us to understand how to make and judge progress while we are inquiring rather than just understanding progress by the knowledge that results. 4) By investigating progress in the disciplines, we can illuminate learning in the disciplines. Progress is more relevant to learning than knowledge because learning is a matter of epistemic progress, advancement and development, whereas knowledge is often seen as a static object and possession.

Further research
The conception of philosophical progress for P4C resolves a number of problems for P4C. Yet as a resolution, this is not a final, definitive position, and further research and inquiry is called for.

Problems that could be further addressed include: 1) How should this conception be incorporated into the education of P4C teachers? How do we help teachers to develop this conception of philosophical progress so they can discern and make philosophical progress? 2) What would a developmental curriculum related to philosophical progress be like and what pedagogy would be necessary to support this? In other words, how can we make the conception simple for novices and more complex for experts? How can we scaffold and strengthen the skills and attitudes necessary for making philosophical progress?

Further research could also be done to test the conception in practice. For example, we could investigate to what extent using this conception enables students to reach more philosophical milestones and resolutions and to get more satisfaction from doing philosophy.

The conception also offers the possibility of new research programs. For example, an empirical study of the extent to which teachers employ a thinking-encouraging, thinking-educating or outcome-leading approach, or a study of the educational effects of these approaches.

In conclusion: Philosophical progress about philosophical progress
This chapter, and this thesis, indicate how I have made philosophical progress by developing a conception of philosophical progress for P4C. I have identified and articulated a number of problems which are simultaneously philosophical and educational problems: inadequacies and incongruities in conceptions about philosophical progress in P4C. I then developed new conceptions that resolve these problems, such as the problem-resolution conception of philosophy, the framework of philosophical inquiry and the stance of the expedition-educator. Do I therefore claim this thesis presents a final position on this matter, defeating all possible counter-arguments and claims? No, but this is not the point of resolving a problem. I have provided a conception of philosophical progress that resolves the identified problems, enhances the praxis of P4C, and indicates a possible direction for resolving a number of other problems and issues. But I also put this conception forward to stimulate the discovery of new problems, which, when resolved, will lead to the development of new, improved conceptions. I am confident that I have resolved a number of important problems that arise in the praxis of P4C, but I also hope that these resolutions will eventually be surpassed and discarded, like a ladder to be climbed to better conceptions.
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