Book Reviews

Thinking in Education is another publication promoting "critical think-ing" through doing philosophy with children in elementary school (and by implication, secondary school, to college, and university) settings. The author does well to locate his arguments – for restructuring educational curricula so as to facilitate the development of critical and creative thinking – within a wider educational "movement" which he helped found and which today has its own gurus, factions, and promotional journals. Lipman addresses the school admin-istrator directly, arguing that those who would stress that education is in a crisis are correct. Lipman, however, reconstructs the discourse of crisis to make it refer to method, rather than content. He claims that there is a general consensus that schools have done a bad job in teaching children to think, but that the cacophony of voices promoting "critical thinking" has not helped educators identify what this "really is," how, if at all, it can be taught, and the criteria by which one will know that this goal has in fact been achieved.

Lipman does not claim that his book will do all this, but rather that Thinking in Education is a kind of prologue to the making of a crucial case regarding "the capacity of philosophy, when properly reconstructed and properly taught, to bring about higher-order thinking in education to be significantly greater than the capacity of an alternative approach" (p.3). Lipman makes this case in fifteen informative, well researched, and generally tightly argued chapters. Part I of the book defines the terms of reference of the whole volume, drawing on philosophical traditions represented by, among others, Kant and Dewey, in order to show how democratic societies and institutions such as schools should encourage "a rationality tempered by judgement" (p. 8) as a habit of mind. This leads to students (and citizens) capable of critical and creative thinking, a "complex" form of reasoning which

requires skills in reflecting not only on the content but also the process of that thinking. Lipman gives the notion of "reasonableness" much purchase in his book, arguing that the cultivation of "reasonable individuals" is the goal of democratic society and schooling alike. Drawing critically on Ryle, he argues for the establishment of a self-appraisive form of thinking across the curriculum, but moves on from there to make a case for having philosophy as a new subject added to the elementary and secondary school curriculum (pp. 24, 142, 263).

Having defined his terms, Lipman proceeds by breaking down thinking into "skill" areas, identifying the different mechanisms of thinking and establishing some ground rules for the cultivation of "reasonableness." Part II – the lengthiest section of the book, and one which gives technical substance to key arguments made in Parts I, II, and IV of the volume – carries these definitional and procedural concerns more specifically to the classroom context. It is not, according to him, unstructured discussion and debate which will "provide a comfortable escalator to higher-order thinking." Rather, he wants to give students access "to the tools of inquiry, the methods and principles of reasons, practice in concept analysis, experience in critical reading and writing, opportunities for creative description and narration as well as in the formation of arguments and explanations, and a community setting in which ideas and intellectual contexts can be fluently and openly exchanged. These are educational conditions that provide an infrastructure upon which a sound superstructure of good judgement can be erected" (p. 172). Lipman constructs this kind of project carefully, providing extensive details, drawn from philosophy, cognitive psychology, and, occasionally, sociology, in order to establish standards of criteria and judgement as powerful procedures to render cognitive activity accountable. He addresses a number of conceptual and practical problems associated with the attempt of actualizing these curricular reforms in schools, giving due attention to disagreements and misconceptions on the nature of thinking, to the role of philosophy in the process, as well as to the development of appropriate pedagogical approaches.

Parts III and IV carry over some of these conceptual and pedagogic concerns, highlighting the nature of "creative thinking," its cognitive coordinates and its relationship to thinking generally, and to critical thinking specifically. Again, Lipman's concern to explore the practical implications of what he is promoting is evident when he discusses the ways different thinking skills can be inculcated in the classroom, the pedagogic use of narrative, texts, and manuals, as well as the social, educational, and political implications of doing philosophy with children in a "community of inquiry."

It is difficult to disagree with the main thrust of Lipman's argument for teaching critical thinking to children. Whether this should be done through the teaching of philosophy, and indeed, whether philosophy should feature as a distinct subject rather than as a tool for thinking **through** the curriculum, are aspects of that argument which, given Lipman's professional vested interest in

the matter (he is, after all, the Director of the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children at Montclair State College), should have been sustained more rigorously throughout the text. A more important concern for me when reading this book, working as I do within the tradition of critical theory and pedagogy, is with the political implications of what Lipman is promoting. Many authors and textbook writers in the critical thinking movement have been taken to task for not acknowledging their political biases, and for betraying the goal of intellectual autonomy they mean to promote by encouraging students "to accept without question certain political perspectives and discourag[ing] students from asking questions about the genesis of these perspectives" (Kaplan, 1991, p. 1).[1] In some ways Lipman's text takes into account such critiques, albeit indirectly. His engagement with sociological traditions, including Marx and Simmel (superficially), Weber and Durkheim lead to politically astute insights and comments, such as his acknowledgement that "skills" teaching cannot be shorn from its moral and normative implications, or that the goal of promoting "reasonableness" should not be equated with the inculcation of dispassionate citizens who are incapable of taking sides. His final chapter on the political significance of the inquiring community at least raises, even if it does not really do justice to, some of the more thorny problems which link education to power. These and other instances of Lipman's awareness of the politics of education should have led him on to a more sophisticated analyses of the social context/s in which "critical thinking," and its teaching, operates. Hence, my disappointment with Lipman's studious avoidance of the contribution to the area that he promotes that critical theorists and pedagogists have made. If he is keen to make a claim for "rationality," for a "community of inquiry," for "dialogic" educational encounters, and at the same time as keen to remain sensitive to the normative and power-laden context in which education operates, then his thesis would be considerably strengthened if he were to do justice to the tradition which social theorists like Habermas, and educators like Friere, Shor, Apple, Giroux, Ellsworth, and McLaren, among many others, have developed.[2] Not to engage in those kinds of perspectives and critiques would render Lipman guilty of a key failing which he correctly identifies in thinking: the inability to be fully, or even sufficiently, self-critical.

NOTES

1. Kaplan, L.D. (1991). Teaching intellectual autonomy: The failure of the critical thinking movement. *Educational Theory, 41*(4), 361-370.
2. There are those working within the "Philosophy with Children Movement" who have profitably drawn the links between critical thinking and critical and feminist pedagogy. Of these I would like to mention John Portelli (Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax), Sally Hagamam (Purdue University), and San MacColl (New South Wales, Australia).

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