

**Becoming a moral self through a
community of ethical enquiry:
A study of a class group from middle to
late childhood in an Irish primary school**

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Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	GENERAL INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1	INTRODUCTION	1
1.2	GENERATIVE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY	2
1.3	PURPOSE OF THE STUDY	5
1.4	METHODOLOGY	7
1.4.1	Researching the theoretical background	7
1.4.2	Nature of qualitative enquiry	8
1.4.3	Research design and sample	9
1.4.4	Generating data: the pedagogical setting	10
1.4.5	Data collection	12
1.4.6	Data analysis procedures.....	17
1.4.7	Provision for trustworthiness and limitations of study	19
1.5	OUTLINE OF STUDY	21
1.5.1	Part I Building a theoretical context	21
1.5.2	Part II Classroom practice: a qualitative analysis	22
1.5.3	Conclusion	23
1.5.4	Appendix.....	23
 PART I - BUILDING A THEORETICAL CONTEXT		
2	THE CURRENT DEBATE: AN OVERVIEW.....	24
2.1	INTRODUCTION	24
2.2	MORAL STAGE THEORY OF JEAN PIAGET.....	24
2.2.1	The heteronomous stage.....	26
2.2.2	The co-operation and autonomy stage	27
2.2.3	Critics of Piaget's theory.....	29
2.3	MORAL STAGE THEORY OF LAWRENCE KOHLBERG.....	32
2.3.1	From moral development to moral education	36
2.3.2	The judgment-action debate.....	38
2.3.3	The Just Community approach	39
2.4	THE PARTICULARIST POSITION	41
2.4.1	The care versus justice debate.....	41
2.4.2	Response to Gilligan	44
2.4.3	The broader picture: the particularist view	46
2.5	TRADITIONAL CHARACTER EDUCATION MOVEMENT	48
2.5.1	Integration of different perspectives	50
2.6	CONCLUSION.....	52
3	ISSUES IN MORAL EDUCATION.....	53
3.1	INTRODUCTION	53
3.2	THE MORAL SELF.....	54
3.2.1	Moral motivation.....	54
3.2.2	The affective and emotive basis of ethics	55

3.2.3	The moral self as a construct.....	57
3.2.4	The narrative view of self	58
3.3	VIRTUE AND MORAL DISPOSITION	60
3.3.1	Aristotle's account	60
3.3.2	The virtue ethics approach	62
3.3.3	Love of the Good	64
3.3.4	Concern for the other	65
3.3.5	Moral exemplars	67
3.3.6	Contemporary culture: inhospitable ground for a rich morality?	69
3.4	WHAT KIND OF MORAL EDUCATION?.....	70
3.4.1	A liberal or non-liberal account?	70
3.4.2	A renewal of civil society	73
3.5	CONCLUSION.....	76
4	ETHICAL ENQUIRY IN THE CLASSROOM.....	78
4.1	INTRODUCTION	78
4.2	DEVELOPMENT OF REASONABLENESS	79
4.2.1	Ability to engage in philosophical enquiry	79
4.2.2	The dialogical construction of the self.....	83
4.2.3	The social construction of the self	85
4.3	THE COMMUNITY OF ETHICAL ENQUIRY	88
4.3.1	Vygotskian learning and meta-cognition	88
4.3.2	Ethical enquiry and education for democracy.....	90
4.3.3	The role of the teacher	92
4.4	THE ROLE OF STORY AND IMAGINATION.....	95
4.4.1	Story and the moral imagination.....	95
4.4.2	Story in the community of enquiry	97
4.5	GENDER AND MORAL ORIENTATION	100
4.5.1	Middle to late childhood	100
4.5.2	Early adolescence.....	101
4.6	CONCLUSION.....	103

PART II - CLASSROOM PRACTICE: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

5	COGNITIVE CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT	106
5.1	INTRODUCTION	106
5.2	COGNITIVE STYLE IN MIDDLE CHILDHOOD	107
5.2.1	Thinking collaboratively: moving towards a community of enquiry ...	107
5.2.2	Beginnings of reflective thinking.....	109
5.2.3	From Mythic to Romantic Understanding	111
5.3	COGNITIVE STYLE IN LATE CHILDHOOD/ EARLY ADOLESCENCE.....	116
5.3.1	Development in reasoning skills	116
5.3.2	From pre-conventional to post-conventional thinking.....	119
5.3.3	Reflection on one's own thought processes	122
5.3.4	Letting go of fixed positions: changing stance	124
5.3.5	Scaffolding by more able pupils	126
5.4	THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN THE COMMUNITY OF ENQUIRY	129
5.5	GENDER ORIENTATION	132

6	NOTIONS OF MORAL RECTITUDE.....	138
6.1	INTRODUCTION	138
6.2	NOTIONS OF FAIRNESS.....	139
6.2.1	Fairness as equal distribution and fairness as equity	139
6.2.2	Fairness as equal treatment	139
6.2.3	Fairness as retributive justice	143
6.3	RIGHTS, DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	145
6.3.1	Children's rights.....	145
6.3.2	Animal rights.....	148
6.3.3	Freedom and responsibility	150
6.3.4	Responsibility for the environment.....	154
6.3.5	Duty and moral obligation	156
6.4	VIRTUE VERSUS VICE	158
6.4.1	Cheating and lying versus truth-telling	158
6.4.2	Stealing versus honesty	160
6.4.3	Weighing right and wrong	162
6.5	CONCLUSION.....	165
7	INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS	168
7.1	INTRODUCTION	168
7.2	FRIENDSHIP RELATIONSHIPS.....	168
7.2.1	Friendship in middle childhood	168
7.2.2	Friendship with increasing cognitive maturity.....	171
7.2.3	Friends and similarity of interests.....	174
7.3	BOYS' AND GIRLS' FRIENDSHIPS.....	177
7.3.1	Boys' perception of friendship.....	177
7.3.2	Girls' perception of boys' and girls' interaction.....	179
7.3.3	The risk of being authentic.....	182
7.4	CONCLUSION.....	184
8	CONCLUSION: RESEARCH OUTCOMES AND IMPLICATIONS.....	186
8.1	INTRODUCTION	186
8.2	DISCUSSION OF OUTCOMES	187
8.2.1	Competence to reflect on moral issues	187
8.2.2	Heightening of moral consciousness.....	192
8.2.3	Development of moral sensibilities.....	195
8.2.4	Friendship, interaction and gender.....	196
8.3	IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY	200
8.3.1	Implications for practice	200
8.3.2	Implications for citizenship.....	202
8.3.3	Implications for future research	204
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	207
	APPENDIX	1

ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study examines moral responsiveness and thinking in a mixed gender class of primary school children over a period of four and a half years. It sets out to track development in children's moral awareness, looking at gains and losses from middle to late childhood, and focusing on cognitive skills, notions of moral rectitude, and interpersonal relationships and friendship.

The first part of the study is designed to offer a theoretical background to inform interpretation of the data in the second part. It examines major issues in morality and moral education in the context of significant recent debates across several disciplines, including developmental psychology, philosophy, sociology and education; it also offers a theoretical perspective on children's ability to think together about morality in a community of enquiry and on related issues of pedagogy.

Through interpretation of transcripts, the second part of the study analyses the children's thinking, in response to a wide range of content, on issues of justice, freedom and responsibility, rights and duties, inclusiveness, and friendship. Gender differences, most notably the reticence of girls to express themselves in a mixed gender group after about age ten, are also examined.

The study demonstrates how, through participation in a community of ethical enquiry such as Thinking Time – Philosophy with Children, children become more thoughtful and develop respect and responsiveness to others as well as other traits of character that are central to democratic citizenship.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child (Article 12, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989).

This thesis is an enquiry into what might broadly be called children's moral development as enacted within an educational setting. More specifically, it is an in-depth study of a mixed gender class of primary school children over a four and a half year period, focusing on a sequence of structured discussions by them of a range of moral topics concerning issues of justice, freedom and responsibility, rights and duties, inclusiveness and friendship. The primary focus is on the children's thinking about these issues, particularly as this is shaped by the interactive process within which it occurs. Accordingly, it examines the children's moral concepts and the thinking skills they deploy in developing them as well as the judgements they make, and the kind of reasoning that supports these judgements. It also analyses the dynamics of dialogue in the group, the patterns of responsiveness among the children, how they influence and are influenced by one another in the development of their thinking. It is concerned too with affective issues, with the development of disposition and sensibility and the emergence of "moral selfhood" as this can be gleaned from the voices that are given expression in the group discussions. While the thesis is not a full-scale longitudinal study, nor exclusively a study of gender issues in moral education, nonetheless it takes advantage of the fact that the data were gathered in a mixed gender class over several years of primary schooling to identify and discuss some important issues concerning the development of moral thinking as well as some salient differences between boys and girls.

The thesis comprises two main parts. Part I establishes a theoretical context for the case study analysis that is conducted in Part II. It explores a wide range of significant and influential writing on moral development and education in childhood, on children's moral thinking, and the social and interactive contexts of their construction of meaning and value. It looks at key landmark studies on these issues, and tracking significant

debates about them across a range of disciplines – including psychology, philosophy, sociology, and educational studies – it attempts to establish an overall sense of the contemporary state of these debates. Part II of the study is devoted to an interpretative analysis of the data gathered for the case study, which consists of forty-seven transcripts of structured discussions by a class group over a period of four and a half years of fieldwork. Further specification of the nature of the fieldwork and of the methodological rubrics that governed the analysis of data is offered in section 1.4 below. The purpose of Part I is to enable this analysis to be carried out in the light of salient research and scholarship and, beyond the necessary considerations of methodological rigour, to provide a substantive theoretical context that can inform the particular interpretative work of Part II.

In the rest of this introduction I will outline

- (i) the generative context of the study
- (ii) its overall purpose
- (iii) the key methodological issues involved in the qualitative analysis of data in Part II
- (iv) a brief overview of the content and sequence of the study, chapter by chapter.

1.2 Generative context of the study

A lot has been said and written about a decline – or alleged decline – in morality in post-modern Ireland. Blame has been attributed to radical change in family structure, increasing marital breakdown and a general erosion of “family values”. This has been related to a general slackening of discipline often traced back to cultural changes, whose first stirrings became evident in the 1960s. The media paints apocalyptic scenarios, evoking an atmosphere of great uncertainty caused by a shifting of moral parameters and especially by a marked decline in religious practice and belief and a much diminished role and influence for the church(es). This is accompanied by a widespread sense that standards in politics and in business have slipped abysmally – a sense fostered by a spate of revelations in a succession of official tribunals about widespread corruption of government ministers, county councillors, civil servants, local officials, captains of industry, and not least the police. In relation to young people, this sense of moral alarm tends to focus on high incidences of substance abuse including binge

drinking and drug-taking, and to highlight as a special concern increasing rates of suicide, especially among young males. Such issues have been dramatised and often sensationalised in the media but they have also become increasingly the focus of concern for parents and educators.

Much of this concern has an indigenous ring but it also reflects wider concerns in western societies where many see the values of individualism, consumerism, and the market unravelling social ties and undermining the moral basis of communities. In many urban environments in Ireland and in other advanced industrialised societies there is supposed to be a diminished sense of belonging or identity with widespread alienation and social fragmentation. Ireland has also begun to experience unprecedented change in making the transition from a society where large-scale emigration has been the norm to a society with significant immigration annually; it is increasingly becoming a multi-ethnic society, obliged to accommodate difference and redefine Irishness.

Mindful of these various changes and reactions they have provoked in the media and among parents and educators, I became more curious about children's own thoughts and feelings about morality as it arose in their experience or impinged on their lives. In my experience in engaging with primary school children both as main-stream class teacher and special educational needs teacher over many years, I had occasion to observe some of their different ways of thinking and reasoning in school situations, e.g. their frequent assertions of "that's not fair" and "you shouldn't do that"; and this had aroused my interest in how they judge right and wrong and what shapes their moral outlooks. This led me to study moral thinking in two groups of children (an older and a younger group) for the degree of Master of Education (Russell, 2000). As a primary school teacher with access to children and enjoying their parents' confidence, I was in a privileged position to immerse myself in the children's world with a view to researching their thinking. Having completed this research, I was more aware of its inherent interest and value and at the same time acutely conscious of how much more work could be done in this area. I was encouraged too by a significant change of attitude towards children at official level in Ireland, influenced by the kind of thinking enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, cited at the beginning of this introduction and issuing in the publication of *The National Children's Strategy Our children – Their Lives* (Government of Ireland, 2000). This document marked a decisive shift away from any idea that children's views were undeserving of serious attention or that they were incapable of reasoning or unfit for meaningful civic participation. It insisted that

“children’s voice” and “agency” were to be respected and promoted, that they were to be consulted on all matters affecting them and that they had both a capacity and a right to contribute actively to shaping their society and environment. The whole ethos of this important document, then, provided a supportive backdrop when I decided to analyse the thinking of my younger group over the following four years until they were at the end of the primary school cycle (which in Ireland is at an average age of twelve). This entailed following the same group of children through to their next school and liaising with parents, Principal and Board of Management with a view to securing permission and approval for further research.

Apart from these wider considerations concerning culture and policy, another more particular aspect of the context out of which this study emerges should be noted here. This concerns my engagement for over a decade in the classroom practice of “Thinking Time” or “Philosophy with Children”. This practice, partially inspired by though not modelled on the Philosophy for Children programme developed by Matthew Lipman and his associates, and now widely disseminated internationally, has been developed by a group of teachers and teacher educators in Ireland. Beginning in 1989, this practice has been adopted in a number of Irish primary schools, with support from principals and boards of management and actively encouraged by some school inspectors. It has been disseminated through in-service courses and Master of Education modules and the Association of Teachers of Philosophy with Children has been founded under whose auspices ongoing development and research has been promoted with financial support from the Department of Education and Science; a specialist journal *Arista* has been founded.

A Thinking Time session is a class discussion on a topic of interest to the children, often selected by them, and conducted in a circle with the teacher participating as facilitator and stimulator of good discussion. It thus becomes a community of enquiry or community of persons-in-relation, speakers and hearers, who communicate with each other under conditions of equality and reciprocity and with a willingness on the part of the participants to reconstruct what they hear from one another and to submit their views to the self-correcting process of further enquiry. According to Lipman & Sharp (1994), such a community presupposes as core values, care for one another as persons, and respect for each other’s views. In the setting of Thinking Time, children have an opportunity to reflect on important issues, to encounter, understand and respect different views, and to reconsider and perhaps alter their own opinions in light of the beliefs and

experiences shared with them by others. What I especially experienced from my ongoing engagement in Thinking Time was a new greatly sensitised capacity to listen to children and through this listening an increased appreciation of and fascination by their thinking on a wide range of issues. This experience led me to see Thinking Time as a fruitful laboratory, so to speak, in which more focused research in children's thinking could be conducted, and increasingly it was their *moral* thinking that interested me. I also became aware of what seemed a significant advantage that research conducted in this setting might have over much of the most influential research in what might be called "the dominant paradigm" on children's moral development. While there has been much research into children's moral thinking, as mediated in one-to-one interview formats where they respond to adult questioning, most notably by Piaget (1932), Kohlberg (1981) and Gilligan (1982), not many studies have focused on children's deliberations in dialogical settings and the changes in their thinking engendered by participation in such a setting. Accordingly, I felt that in Thinking Time I had not only a feasible medium for research but also in some respects, a more fruitful one for accessing the more dynamic and creative aspects of children's thinking, its construction within social settings of peers, and perhaps its expression in more "authentic voices" than might be captured through the more standard asymmetrical interview format.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate moral awareness in a mixed gender class of primary school children as facilitated by a dedicated process of group discussion over a period of four and a half years. The study does not aim to test any detailed, pre-formulated hypothesis; it sets out, rather, to generate a large data-base of transcripts of an extended sequence of such discussions and then to reconstruct inductively from these data what they tell us about the moral thinking and responsiveness of these children over that period. While primarily inductive in nature, the study did of course have a determining focus of interest and some shaping questions – which were themselves a function both of my previous practical experience and my reading of related theoretical literature. At the outset of the study my interest was in morally salient aspects of children's experience in a broad sense and my questions concerned such basic issues as: How do children form their views on moral matters? What for them *is* a moral matter and what makes it count as such? What shapes their moral outlooks – and how, and how

much, do they themselves do this shaping through more or less autonomous processes of thinking and reasoning? What role is played by their views – and the thinking and reasoning supporting these views – in influencing their actions and behaviour and shaping their characters? How might this role be affected by factors that are not purely cognitive, such as emotion, habit and motivation? It was questions of this degree of generality that first prompted the study. In addition, I was interested in tracking *development* in the children with regard to the substance of these questions (while remaining open to the possibility that this ‘development’ might in some respects entail losses as well as gains). While I was interested in the thinking of individual children, my primary focus was on how this thinking influenced and was influenced by the thinking of other children in the *whole group*. One of my primary interests, in fact, was to examine the potency of the particular format of discussion that I was using with the children (Thinking Time – Philosophy with Children) as a medium of moral education – in terms of its effectiveness in enhancing children’s moral thinking, enabling them to become more thoughtful, respectful and responsive to others, and fostering traits of character that are central to democratic citizenship.

To generate data that would help me to pursue these broad interests and questions, I engaged in a series of discussions with these children within the setting of Thinking Time. Over the course of these discussions (forty seven in all) I introduced many topics dealing with issues, for example, of justice, freedom, rights and responsibilities, property claims and friendship. There was no specific blue-print for selecting topics, many of which emerged in response either to the children’s attention or enthusiasm (or lack thereof) in the preceding session(s) or to contemporary events with moral import, often dramatised in the media, that clearly sparked their interest. My major purpose in the study then was to offer an illuminating interpretation of the data gathered during an extended period of field-work that was guided by an overall pattern of interest while at the same time, within this overall pattern, remaining open to a considerable degree of improvisation.

With the data assembled and subjected to a preliminary reading, I was in a position to specify more clearly defined aims for the study – or to clarify the lines along which the interpretation should run, by indicating more precisely the aspects of children’s moral awareness that it was intended to illuminate. The study aims, then, to develop an account of the children’s moral awareness in three distinct though related respects: a) the cognitive skill and sensitivity involved in the formation of their views – their

growing ability to deduce, infer, generalise, justify, make apt distinctions, reflect on the evidence or arguments underpinning their moral judgements, take the perspective of the other and, in particular, allow this perspective to challenge and possibly transform their own; b) the content of their notions of moral rightness and goodness, and the relationship of this to heightened moral sensibility, dispositions to act rightly or well, and overall development as a moral self; and c) their understanding of the claims of personal relationship and especially of friendship and, in this respect, their sense of relevant differences between boys and girls.

These aims are pursued through two complementary phases of the investigation: an interpretative analysis of the data constituted by transcripts of the discussions with the children and, as a prelude, an examination of existing scholarship and debate – across a range of disciplines, including developmental psychology, philosophy, sociology and education – on core issues in moral education (and indeed morality itself), children's ability to think collaboratively in a community of enquiry, related issues of pedagogy, and gender differences in middle and late childhood. This latter examination comprises the first part of the study and is intended to provide a theoretical background to inform and situate the in-depth and detailed interpretation of the accumulated transcripts presented in the second part of the study.

1.4 Methodology

1.4.1 Researching the theoretical background

In this research I was concerned to build a theoretical context for the kind of study of moral thinking in children that follows in Part II. This entailed a study of recent research into children's moral development, children's cognitive processes, the social construction of thought, the use of narrative as a medium and trigger for moral reflection, the moral self as a largely narrative construct, virtue and moral disposition, and the role of gender in moral orientation and development. In examining major issues in moral education I am inevitably drawn into debates within contemporary philosophy about the nature of morality itself. Indeed the enquiry does not manage to avoid political philosophy and, in particular, the ways in which morality is differently conceived within a liberal perspective, emphasising freedom and rights, and a communitarian one emphasising communal responsibilities, civic virtues, and solidarity within a civil society with a strong premium on trust and civic friendship. Most central to Part I

however, is the very influential body of work in cognitive developmental psychology, pioneered by Jean Piaget, extended significantly in the field by Lawrence Kohlberg, and later contested by Carol Gilligan.

Piaget's (1932) work has had an enormous impact on twentieth century pedagogy but it is his moral stage theory that is of interest here. Kohlberg (1981), who further refined Piaget's moral stage theory, has been the most influential and controversial figure in moral education since the 1960s. His emphasis is not on the content of morality but rather the form or structure of moral reasoning, and this has tended to be the primary focus of developmental moral education. Gilligan (1982), a central figure in the care versus justice debate, has been a major influence in questioning the dominance of cognitivist approaches to moral development in recent times. Lipman's (1988, 1991) writings also have a special importance in Part I of my study because of his pioneering work in Philosophy for Children, which helped to foster dialogue and reflective thinking and to turn the classroom into a community of enquiry. Lipman's emphasis on dialogue is supported by Vygotsky's theory of the social construction of the self. The writings of these and other authors will be the object of attention and analysis in Part I. They are chosen because they address the central issues at stake in the thesis and because of their influence in recent debates about these issues as well as in practical approaches to moral education and classroom pedagogy. More specifically however, they are selected because the perspectives which they open up – and not least their diverging and conflicting emphases – are intended to inform the different kind of interpretative work carried out in Part II. That latter work is essentially a hermeneutical exercise; in Gadamerian terms one might say that Part I helps to form the “pre-cognitions” that are brought to it. One might also advert to a “hermeneutical circle” here. It is not only that Part I is intended to develop a more sensitive and critical eye for Part II. It is also the case that Part II can help to vivify as well as to confirm or challenge the readings of Part I.

1.4.2 Nature of qualitative enquiry

In analysing the data on classroom practice I chose qualitative research methods for the following reasons. First, they are best suited to this type of enquiry because they allow for interpretation of human thoughts and feelings (as expressed in the transcripts of recorded dialogues with the children). As a primary school teacher I was interested in

understanding how children thought and felt, what shaped their understandings, how they formed their views, and how they used language to express those views and negotiate complex dilemmas. All this could best be captured through approaches geared to interpretation rather than proof. Therefore the philosophical underpinnings of this kind of research are different from those of quantitative research. Data were gathered in the natural setting which in this case was the classroom; I as researcher became the human instrument, and data analysis was inductive. The study might be characterised as illuminative in that its aim was to focus on meanings, understandings and perspectives operative in children's utterances – and in the whole conversations of which they were parts – and to provide an account that rendered them more intelligible by grasping patterns of coherence or divergence or by rendering more explicit and systematic what might otherwise have remained implicit and fragmentary. The children were revealing themselves through their words and my task was to capture the interrelatedness of these revelations in their complexity and diversity, and to do interpretative justice to the richness of meaning contained in their words.

1.4.3 Research design and sample

The group chosen for this study consisted of a mixed gender class of 29 pupils aged between seven and eight years in the fourth year in primary school (2nd class). They were of average ability and not deemed by the teaching community to be in any way exceptional. I began recording their dialogues in October 1998 and continued (with gaps) until May 2003. There were some changes in the composition of the sample in that within two years of the commencement of field-work four pupils had left and five others had joined the group. The new members who joined the class came from various schools in the neighbourhood and were unfamiliar with the practice of Thinking Time – Philosophy with Children. A core group of 25 participated from beginning to end of the study. The children were in a mixed-gender school in a middle-class urban area. In the first year of the study they were in my own Junior School which has twenty teachers on the staff. They then entered the Senior School, also a mixed-gender school in the same area with twenty teachers on staff. For the final two years of the study, the group comprised 14 girls and 16 boys.

In conducting the study I used the Constant Comparative Method of Glasser & Strauss (1967), later expanded by Lincoln & Guba (1985) to analyse the transcripts of

recorded dialogues in the community of enquiry. An emergent research design best suited my purposes as it meant ongoing data analysis where significant understandings could emerge in the process. I began with an initial focus of enquiry and refined my focus as I proceeded with data collection and analysis.

1.4.4 Generating data: the pedagogical setting

As explained earlier the practice which provided the data for this study was Thinking Time – Philosophy with Children and I shall provide here a somewhat fuller account of what this practice entails. It was first introduced to Ireland in the late 1980s through the collaborative work of Philomena Donnelly and Joseph Dunne. The wider movement, Philosophy for Children, was begun by Matthew Lipman in the late 1960s. Lipman's model envisages a high degree of intervention by the teacher and the use of particular texts. A narrative form of the philosophical text is considered the most appropriate way of bringing philosophy to children. Children do not study the canonical philosophers but take the first steps in becoming philosophers themselves. Later they are introduced to the rudiments of formal and informal logic as an aid in strengthening their reasoning powers. Lipman's (1988) basic contention is that if we want children to become reflective adults we must encourage them to become reflective children.

The Irish model, popularly known as Thinking Time (Donnelly 1994), uses the community of enquiry in a somewhat different way from that of Lipman. The Socratic dialogue format is kept but there is less direct intervention by the teacher and more scope for open-ended discussion by the children and consequently greater access for the researcher to oral expressions of their thinking. The teacher is free to choose texts such as stories and poems which are used at the beginning of the session to stimulate and focus discussion, and the children can have an input here too, either in the choice of story, poem or the key question to be discussed. The change in name from the American one *Philosophy for Children* to *Philosophy with Children*, is intended to emphasise the larger and less structured role given to children in this model.

Wonder is the driving force in children's philosophical thinking and is something that conventional pedagogy has perhaps been reluctant to harness. Aristotle contends that philosophy begins in wonder (*Metaphysics* 982b12). Echoing this also Gareth Matthews suggests that children's puzzlement has a freshness and inventiveness that contrasts with the staleness that often accompanies maturity and suggests that teachers

and parents fail to recognise the moments of pure reflection in children's thinking (Matthews, 1984, p. 52). In the practice of Thinking Time one has ample opportunity to tune into and harness the children's sense of wonder – it takes only willingness and enthusiasm to conduct the practice on a regular basis and an ability to become more perceptive and skilful in doing so.

In my school Thinking Time sessions are conducted on a weekly basis with discussions lasting from twenty minutes with young children to forty-five minutes or more with older children. The children sit in a circle and the teacher joins them in the role of facilitator and participant observer. The circle arrangement is preferred because it allows all the participants to have eye contact with one another, and since a circle has neither a beginning nor an end, everyone is of equal rank, including the teacher once he or she joins the circle. The role of the teacher, however, is not a passive one. While still retaining authority he or she encourages the children to take the initiative and express themselves freely and is at all times conscious that interventions on his or her part should aim to raise their thinking to a higher and more reflective level.

The theme for discussion is usually chosen one to four days beforehand so that the children have time for reflection. The first speaker volunteers and when finished speaking tips the person sitting next to him or her in the circle; that person has the choice of speaking or remaining silent and passing the tip. This ensures minimum interruption and allows the dialogue to flow. Each child is encouraged to participate. One is free to remain silent if one so wishes, not least because the classroom community must be able to accommodate those for whom overt participation is painful or frightening. The ground rules, always on display on a poster and alluded to at the outset, ensure that everyone understands that one must listen to others, respect others, and say what one believes to be true. The aim is to give children the opportunity to develop the thinking and reflective capacities necessary in making judgements, and the purpose of enquiry as a collaborative search for truth is emphasised. The teacher's input as facilitator cannot be decided beforehand because to a large extent he or she has to follow the enquiry where it leads. There is more teacher intervention in the earlier sessions but one can withdraw more and more as the children take charge, eventually participating as one of the group and only speaking when one gets the "tip".

Thinking Time – Philosophy with Children differs in its agenda from *Circle Time* which enjoys a degree of popularity in Irish schools. In contrast to the latter, it moves beyond the domain of feelings and wants to concentrate on thinking and reflective

capacities. It is not that these feelings or emotions or personal desires are excluded from the process; it is rather that they are validly included when they are relevant – as they often are – to clarification by the children of concepts and arguments about moral issues that have general significance beyond their particular feeling states. The participants not only extend their understanding of the thinking of others in the group but also reflect on their own thought processes. How successfully the children attempt this can be judged from the dialogues that furnish the data for Part II of this study.

1.4.5 Data collection

I explained the focus of my enquiry and elicited the support of the Principals, class teachers and parents of the children involved in the research in both Junior and Senior schools. To gather data for the study I conducted sessions once-weekly in the classroom. Thus Thinking Time served as both a pedagogical practice and a research laboratory. The teachers in the school were familiar with the practice of Thinking Time since my colleague, Philomena Donnelly, had already set it up in the school where it had been running since the late 1980s. The school regarded it as an innovative practice that could form a normal part of school work insofar as it was consistent with the curriculum aims of furthering higher order cognitive processes. To explain the thinking behind the practice of elementary school philosophy I sent a journal article by Matthew Lipman (1974) to all parents of the children in my chosen class. Since most of the parents already knew me as a teacher of long-standing in the school and some of their children had come to me for learning support in either English or Mathematics, it was not difficult to gain their trust and support. I also sought and received permission from parents to videotape some of the sessions, assuring them that the anonymity of their child would be protected and that video material would only ever be used for educational purposes.

A wide range of issues that provoke puzzlement were discussed in the Thinking Time sessions such as the origins of the universe, the existence of aliens, where dreams come from, and the kind of world it would be if there were no books, no television etc. For the purpose of this research I confined my focus to topics of moral salience. These included justice in its many forms, equality and the race issue, rights and duties, freedom and responsibility, honesty and truthfulness, goodness, beauty and friendship. A discussion on the virtues implied a corresponding exploration of the vices with the

emphasis on the justification for distinguishing between both. Although I had a general idea of the main roads the research might take, it was not a straight pathway. In terms of content, discussed in sequence from week to week, different events and circumstances took it sideways and along unplanned pathways. The engagement of the children was crucial, whether it was with a story or poem, a political event or an experience to which they could relate.

In order to encourage reflective thinking, sometimes I used stories or poems; at other times I chose media issues. As far as possible I located the story, poem or event within the children's own experience thus enabling them to identify with it and to empathise with the characters involved. This is in keeping with Kieran Egan's (1988, p. 124) view that engaging children in the binary opposites of good and evil, beauty and ugliness through story provides an opportunity for self-reflection through interaction with others. The right kind story or poem proved very rewarding as trigger material. Stories with characters involved in situations that embodied moral dilemmas helped to direct children to core moral issues embedded in the stories. I used many of Philip Cam's (1997) stories in this research because they were concerned with fundamental moral issues such as how we come by a knowledge of right and wrong and who should decide what is right and what is not. Mindful that the children were greatly helped by a narrative context in engaging with abstract concepts, I chose poems and stories in consultation with the children themselves who more often than not wanted an input into the choice of question to be discussed as they got more familiar and confident with the format. Most themes were introduced in story form and ended with a question that the children discussed in a session which lasted for thirty minutes at age eight and for about forty-five minutes at age twelve.

My first few sessions of Thinking Time with the children were a process of getting to know each other. This was both important and necessary, since I was at this time involved in learning support, specialising in language development and reading difficulties in the school, and was not their class teacher. My only regular contact with them was through my regular weekly visits to them – visits during which the class teacher exempted herself. While the children discussed a topic I recorded the dialogue on a tape-recorder and since the children were wary of it at first, I assured them that it had one purpose only, to record *all* their utterances. In time, rather than being an intimidating presence, the tape-recorder came to symbolise the importance of their

conversations. Usually when the discussion got underway, and they were accustomed to the practice, they seemed to ignore the tape-recorder.

Transcribing the audio-tapes was a laborious task, involving long hours deciphering conversation, which occasionally seemed inaudible. I showed the children the transcripts from the outset to explain the presence of the tape-recorder. I was asked each week of that first year for the transcript which was kept in the classroom and read avidly by many. This surprised me as I had not expected them to find the transcript of great interest. I enlarged the print for ease of reading and many searched eagerly to find their own contributions to the conversation. In this first year I recorded twenty sessions in all, covering a variety of issues.

After an absence of a year and a half I continued dialogue sessions with them when they were now in 4th class in the Senior School, aged nine to ten. Of the original group of twenty-nine, four had left and five new children from other schools had joined the class. The class teacher left the room as I entered, having put the children sitting in the circle ready to begin. Initially in the four sessions that followed I was aware of a regression, less willingness to listen to others, ridicule of an opposed view, and less focused thinking which necessitated a lot of intervention on my part. The ground rules, respect for others and deference towards difference in particular, had to be emphasised once more as friction between certain individuals was obvious and they attempted to settle scores in the group.

I noted in my journal (which I kept from the outset) my doubts about continuing with this group and whether they would be suitable for the kind of research I had in mind. For a while I considered taking a different group of children. With grave reservations, I decided to try for another few sessions as they had seemed so promising when they were younger. By the time we came to the fifth session after resumption of contact, I noticed that the group had begun to bond better and to build on each other's contributions, adding their own. Taking the perspective of the other and justifying their reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with another marked a turning point. I noticed that trust was beginning to characterise the discussions more; rather than being wary they seemed to trust me and each other more. Only when this trust was established could they become comfortable with entertaining the possibility of letting go of their own positions and modifying their points of view in the light of the reflections of others.

A smooth and easy passage could not be guaranteed. Concentration in the group was affected by frequent interruptions from outside in spite of the "Do not disturb" sign on

the door. People occasionally came in on errands or to seek a group whose turn it was to attend Learning Support. Fund-raising activities such as cake sales often caused them to become over-excited, frequently checking their watches to get out quickly and spend money. On wet days, if they were unable to go outside, there was a lot of pent up energy and their concentration suffered, but the Thinking Time sessions continued nonetheless. Concentration was always better if the sessions were held in the forenoon.

For the final two years of the study the children had a class teacher who had done educational research and who was very interested in philosophical enquiry. I agreed that she could participate in the group and she greatly enriched the process by her contributions. At first she found it difficult to abandon her role of offering long comments and imparting information. It was a different – and initially quite difficult – experience for her to refrain from direct teaching and instead stimulate reflective thinking, saying as little as possible. I welcomed her interest and contributions because it was an extra support in scaffolding the pupils' arguments, stimulating them and questioning with a view to extending their thinking. From time to time she was able to tell me how the influence of Thinking Time sometimes transferred to other areas of activity inside or outside the classroom. I also began to depend on her to get the children to read aloud in class beforehand the required story or poem which was to be the trigger material for our next enquiry session. Some of these stories were quite long and sometimes took a half an hour to read. Each child would get a copy of the story or poem to take home and could reflect on it in the meantime.

To improve the children's own critical thinking skills in the final year of the study I showed them a video recording I had made of my previous research group (Russell, 2000). The discussion in question concerned Kohlberg's Heinz dilemma: Should Heinz steal the drug that would save his wife's life, breaking the law in the process? I asked them to critique it, giving them certain guidelines. My aim here was to put them in a position to talk about criteria for good discussion thus enabling them to become more critical and gain a meta-perspective on the process. It was interesting to note that they took issue with the children in the video for the times they did not justify their reasons, for going off track, for not challenging each other enough and repeating another's argument without building on it. Ironically this was something which they themselves frequently did. They were interested to see how this other group dealt with a similar issue and, despite their criticisms, on the whole considered them to be better speakers than themselves.

As time went on the children became more and more able to discuss in depth, exposing themselves but not compromising without what they saw as sufficient reason for doing so. What came up was nearly always unpredictable if we followed the enquiry where it led. As it was inherently open-ended, there was always the risk of material coming up that might be deemed unsuitable. In that eventuality I did not have a specific contingency plan. As a teacher one deals with issues as they arise every day in the classroom and trusts that one's judgement is the right one in the particular circumstance. In the final two years, with the class teacher present in the group having knowledge of the SPHE programme (Social Personal and Health Education) and what was age-appropriate, I felt more secure in the group. In all I recorded 47 sessions of Thinking Time.

These transcripts form the data of the research. I engaged more intensively with the group at certain periods and hence they are unevenly spread throughout the study period. They consist of 19 transcripts from 2nd class, one from 3rd class, seven from the 4th class, 16 from 5th class and four from 6th class (See table 1 below).

Class	Age Group	Transcript Number
2 nd class	7-8 years	transcripts 1-19
3 rd class	8-9 years	transcript 20
4 th class	9-10 years	transcripts 21-26
5 th class	10-11 years	transcripts 27-43
6 th class	11-12 years	transcripts 44-47

Table 1. Class level, age group, transcripts of dialogues

I have numbered all the transcripts so that in looking at the data, the higher the transcript number, the later the dialogue took place in the fieldwork. For example, tr47 represents the final dialogue session, conducted in 6th class when the children were eleven to twelve years old. In addition to the transcripts, I continually wrote memos recording passing observations and reflections and kept an ongoing journal to note mood, atmosphere, non-verbal behaviour and anything that seemed relevant to the study, not captured in the recordings. Family break-up, parental illness and depression impacted on some children's behaviour and participation and was important to note, as

will be evident later. This recording of my audit trail was to prove very valuable when it came to writing the final report.

1.4.6 Data analysis procedures

In the Constant Comparative Method of Glaser and Strauss (1967) one adopts a radically different way of thinking about data from that of the quantitative researcher. A non-mathematical procedure with different underpinnings and approach, it is more flexible and less pre-planned and controlled. One listens to what the children say and how they say it, and one stays alert for how they are interpreting what is said. In this study it involved sorting through the data to find categories of meaning and to arrive at significant themes and patterns. My aim was to identify those themes that stood alone and those that formed salient relationships and patterns.

What was important in the study could not be predetermined but evolved from the categories of meaning that I derived inductively from the data. In this derivation there was a subjective element in that I had to make interpretive judgements about what was really significant and meaningful. These judgements had to be carefully considered because my task was to make explicit what was implicit, capturing the children's experience in context. In finding meaning in what was there, I was bringing as much hermeneutical skill to the task as possible, translating what I had at hand and bringing a kind of educated mind to it that the children did not have. The emphasis in this type of research is on "illumination and extrapolation rather than causal determination, prediction and generalisation", the latter being the hallmarks of quantitative research (Quinn Patton, 1990, p. 424).

In transcribing the audio-tapes I adhered to the children's exact words without editing them. As these *verbatim* transcripts form the primary data of the research I examined various methods for organising them. A computer software package called N6 (Nudist 6) seemed at first an attractive option. It could help with sorting and coding, and with arranging and synthesising ideas, but on closer inspection, managing the software with its complex system of coding seemed more daunting and time-consuming than anything done manually with scissors and paste. My data were not large-scale enough to warrant the use of this kind of computer software. There did not seem to be great benefit to it and in the end I chose to rely on a manual method and the hermeneutical finesse that it required. Cumbersome though it was, I felt more secure with the hands-on method and the direct engagement with and more personal control over the data that it afforded.

From the beginning of data collection I made comments in the margins of the transcripts, looking at what was there and giving it a name or label. Informal records of my thinking or memos helped provide direction and to sort out ideas. I identified the broadest categories of meaning first. Tree structures helped to identify categories and subcategories. The next task was to refine these categories and subcategories, keeping conceptually related categories together. Overlapping ideas were combined and the relationships and patterns across categories explored, using the look-and-feel-alike criteria (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). When I identified a broad category I gave it a number and pasted it into my file. For example when I identified friendship and interpersonal relationships, I combed through all 47 transcripts and cut out every utterance that pertained to this category. I usually cut the whole piece of conversation, including the child's name. This was important for later study of gender issues. Each piece had to be coded as I cut it out, the number of the transcript and the page number for easy reference and each piece was colour-coded to denote the class level of the child at the time of this particular utterance: green for 2nd class, brown for 3rd, blue for 4th, red for 5th and purple for 6th. Often categories overlapped, hence the need for more than one copy for cutting. I put memos and colour-coded material into a binder making sure that the material was easily retrievable for sorting and cross-referencing. The refining of categories continued until all sources had been exhausted and the categories seemed saturated. When the categories are saturated we have, according to Strauss & Corbin (1998, p. 121), the foundation and beginning structure for theory building.

The many broad categories could be grouped under three overarching categories: cognitive processes, notions of moral rectitude, and interpersonal relations and friendship. These categories had several sub-categories and concerned *how* the children think, the content or *the what* of their thinking, and the group dynamic or patterns of participation and relationships within the group, as is indicated by the presence of the third category here. I coded for group process also, noting movement and change, how interaction in the group evolved and changed over time. Then a comprehensive picture began to emerge, a portrayal of the thinking of the participants in the study.

Adjustments and changes were made to the original objectives as the research progressed, responding to the new realities of the situation. In analysing, I was interpreting, illuminating, giving a new vision of the experiences embodied in the data. In hermeneutical analysis, the insightfulness and previous relevant experiences of the analyst are primary, and they in turn are rooted in tacit knowledge that is deeply internal

(Polanyi, 1983). While this is unavoidable – and calls for the kinds of checks adverted to in the next section below – in writing up the analysis, I have, where applicable, located the findings in the larger body of knowledge, referring back to the theoretical literature explored in Part I that is background to the practice in order to make linkages or to contextualise interpretation offered, and by reference to more publicly accredited and authoritative work in the field, to provide general parameters for the analysis.

1.4.7 Provision for trustworthiness and limitations of study

Lincoln & Guba (1985) use the term trustworthiness, to connote the believability or credibility of a researcher's findings. The trustworthiness of the findings is tied directly to the trustworthiness of the evaluator who collects and analyses the data and trustworthiness here, as I have already stressed, is not just a matter of meticulous care and reliability in all the more straightforward aspects of the tasks, such as recording and transcribing, but also interpretative flair, imaginative resourcefulness and informed judgement in the more contestable and hazardous aspects of interpretation and analysis. Being mindful of this I have provided details of my audit trail, and my taped recordings and transcripts are available for scrutiny or for verification of my findings. More immediately, I have tried to ensure that when presenting particular interpretations I do so with constant reference to direct quotations from the transcripts so that the reader has a better opportunity to detect arbitrary or ungrounded interpretations and to monitor the fit between an interpretation and its evidential basis in transcripts. Moreover, the outcomes of the research were presented to the class teacher who had participated in the discussions and cooperated in the study. Her corroboration of the findings helps to triangulate them and add to the cogency of the study. At completion of fieldwork the parents were shown two videotaped presentations of the children participating in Thinking Time, one which took place toward the beginning of the study and the other at the end and their views and comments were elicited. I received very positive feedback from parents who were impressed with the level of discussion and the impact that participation in a community of ethical enquiry could have on their children. They expressed an interest in seeing what a video presentation of the same group discussing the same topic four years hence would produce. This of course by no means supports detailed interpretations offered in the study; however it does provide some confirmation with regard to the credibility of the overall format within which it was conducted.

The ultimate test of the trustworthiness of a qualitative study, according to Mischler (1990), is whether one has enough faith in the findings to act upon them. It is encouraging that many teachers in my school have taken up the practice of Thinking Time or expressed a strong interest in doing so but, with respect to this study, “acting on findings” would of course entail more specific commitments than this. What these commitments might be is an issue to which I shall return in the final chapter.

The findings of this qualitative research study must be considered in relation to its limitations. The sample is a small one and reflects the views of children in a particular class in an urban middle class suburb. The sample was not random. There was a convenience factor; I chose this class because of the age group and the willingness of the class teacher to facilitate me in conducting my study over a long period. Because of these factors one has to be wary of generalisation. Although I strove to divest myself of power, my role as teacher in the group could possibly impact on some children’s willingness to be truly honest and open. My presence and that of the class teacher in the group could impact on the children’s opinions, influencing them to produce the views that they thought would meet with our approval. In response to this misgiving, I can only say that, apart from the observer effect that goes with any such study and indeed the inhibitions from almost any social situation, I was not aware of it as being an issue. Rather, there was much evidence to the contrary. The children seemed open and uncontrived – frequently with me and with the class teacher.

Common concerns centre round the subjectivity of the evaluator. Qualitative studies are inevitably subjective because the findings reflect the impressions and opinions of the researcher. However it is the quality of the observations that matter. The issue is about researcher credibility, about fairness and balance, generating multiple perspectives rather than claims to absolute truth. Rather than generalise from the findings, in this kind of research one extrapolates from them. Extrapolation persuades rather than proves and aspires to be credible rather than certain. Quinn Patton (1990, p. 490) suggests that the findings in a qualitative research study can be persuasive in that they provide information about a particular setting that is useful and can inform action. Whether this study achieves this kind of persuasiveness is a matter which can more profitably be discussed in the final chapter.

1.5 Outline of study

This thesis has eight chapters in all. Following this introduction, which comprises chapter one, there are two main parts in the study. Part I outlines the theoretical background both to the practice and to the interpretation of data generated through it while Part II provides this interpretation of those data. The study is completed by a concluding chapter.

1.5.1 Part I Building a theoretical context

Part I examines the theoretical background to the study and contains three complementary chapters. Chapter two gives an account of recent debate about moral development, outlining the dominant figures and influences, based largely in psychology. Here I outline the developmental approach to moral education, pioneered by Piaget who charted children's moral development in two cognitive stages, the amoral egocentric and the autonomous stage and Kohlberg who refined Piaget's stage theory, adding four more stages.

I then look at the criticisms of cognitive developmental theories of moral development, most notably by Gilligan who claimed that they represented an over-emphasis on principle-based justice at the expense of emotions such as care and compassion. Next I examine different approaches to moral development which go beyond the cognitivist approach and also differ from the care perspective. These include Blum's moral responsiveness theory and various positions developed by Flanagan and others. The Traditional Character Education movement, with a fundamentally different approach to that of the cognitive developmentalists, is also considered as are efforts since the 1980s to integrate the different perspectives and combine the core aspects of Kohlbergian structuralism with character education.

Chapter three advances the account by moving it deeper into the realms of philosophical ethics. It examines approaches, traceable back to Plato and Aristotle, that go beyond a morality of principle or duty to consider the good life as a life of virtue, communally, dialogically, and narratively constructed (in for example, Murdoch, MacIntyre, Taylor, and Noddings). It also looks at different ways of construing the relationship between ethics and politics, with their different entailments for the relationship between moral and civic education.

Moving closer to pedagogical issues and classroom practice, chapter four looks at various theories of children's ability to think collaboratively about morality in a community of enquiry. It considers the arguments of Lipman and Matthews for a greater recognition of children's capacity to develop reasonably, especially through open-ended Socratic discussion. It also examines the wider social constructivist – and especially Vygotskian – influence on the theoretical conceptualisation of a community of enquiry and on related theories of the role of story in the development of moral imagination. Finally, it considers some research on the relationship between gender and moral orientation in children.

1.5.2 Part II Classroom practice: a qualitative analysis

Informed by the extensive theoretical discussion in Part I, Part II moves to interpretation and analysis of the textual data, generated of the children's discussion of moral topics.

Chapter five focuses on thinking processes and cognitive styles as the children move through the continuum from middle to late childhood and early adolescence. The gains – and losses – inherent in the development of thinking are examined as is the role of the teacher, in stimulating reflection and thoughtfulness, and the scaffolding of the less able by the more able pupils in the group. This chapter also focuses on ways in which children confront biases and stereotyping in their thinking especially in responding to reflections by other children. Finally, it looks at issues of group dynamics including different levels of participation and some gender differences.

Chapter six extends the discussion, examining children's apprehensions and judgements in relation to core moral concepts. It analyses various notions of right and wrong and focuses more explicitly on a range of substantive moral issues: truth-telling, theft, friendship, duty and moral obligation, a broad spectrum of rights – human rights, children's rights and animal rights – and responsibilities to others, to the environment, and to all who share the planet with us. In examining notions of freedom, duty and moral obligation, the issue of choice comes up: Who is making our choices? How do we know what is right? Similarly, examining the notion of fairness and equal treatment raises issues of racism; in this chapter we see children looking at racism in themselves and the challenges posed to them by the values of inclusion.

Chapter seven explores the children's views on friendship and what they consider to be the important qualities of a friend. Similarities and differences in boys' and girls'

conceptions of friendship are examined – as are the significantly changed levels of participation in the group by boys and girls in the final two years of the study. Girls’ and boys’ views of each other and girls’ perception of the effect on them of interaction with boys in a mixed gender class are analysed as is the girls’ greater reticence after age ten (the subject of much recent research).

1.5.3 Conclusion

Chapter eight, which concludes the study, looks at the significant findings that have emerged in the analysis of Part II, setting them in the context of the existing research and debates in moral philosophy and education, considered in Part I. Central issues in these debates are again examined and discussed in light of the findings. The significance of the Thinking Time community of enquiry forum in deepening moral reasoning and understanding, in developing moral sensibilities and in enabling children to have a voice on issues that concern them, is also considered. The chapter concludes with discussion of implications of the study for pedagogical practice in Irish primary schools, for the development of policy on citizenship and civic education, and for future research.

1.5.4 Appendix

The Appendix contains a complete list of the topics discussed in each of the forty-seven sessions. It also contains a sample of transcripts of children’s dialogues, recorded at different stages during the course of the study.

PART I - BUILDING A THEORETICAL CONTEXT

2 THE CURRENT DEBATE: AN OVERVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will look at some of the most significant discussions on moral development, exploring the arguments of the last few decades, beginning with Piaget and linking back to Kant. This will entail examining a great deal of the most important recent work on moral development and education and exploring the different strands of thought from the impartialist perspective of Kant, Piaget and Kohlberg with universal principles predominating, to the particularist position of Gilligan, which takes account of the particulars of a situation. I will look at Gilligan's (1982) studies of women's moral thinking that change the definition of the moral domain and focus on the difference between a care and a justice orientation. The different positions that have been taken subsequently by other theorists will be looked at and approaches to moral education examined. There is disagreement as to what essentially morality is and what the most effective approaches to moral development are. The traditional character education position emphasises direct teaching of societal values and habituation in the virtues, while the cognitive developmental approach aims at stimulating principled moral reasoning. I will be showing that Kohlberg's (1981) major contribution is in emphasising the importance of understanding moral development in educating children. Building on the work of Piaget, Kohlberg's theory focuses on moral decision-making and developmental growth. It is essentially a theory of justice reasoning, influenced by Durkheim's vision to create a moral society in the classroom. Recent developments attempt to stress the commonalities of the different positions to integrate the cognitive development approach with the traditional character education approach (Berkowitz, 1998; Likona, 1983).

2.2 Moral stage theory of Jean Piaget

Recent research on moral development stems primarily from the cognitive theories of Jean Piaget. Not much research into children's thinking took place before him and moral development was not his main concern. His research consisted mainly of studies with school-going children and their beliefs about right and wrong and involved verbal

responses to a standard interview or set of questions. Moral judgment and not moral behaviour was his focus. Children's feelings and emotions did not form part of his interest. These investigations led Piaget to conclude that children's morality throws light on adult morality and that all morality consists in a system of rules and consciousness of rules. Observing children playing the game of marbles and how they applied the rules of the game led Piaget to believe that morality can be considered a developmental process. He believed that the child would progress from the study of the rules of games to the analysis of moral realities imposed on him by the adult (Piaget, 1932, p. 96).

Piaget's impartialist view of morality was in the Kantian tradition with morality being seen as a set of rules governing inter-personal relations. These rules engender duties and obligations. For Kant (1959), rational acceptance was sufficient to motivate conformity to morality. This conception of morality, focusing on rights, duties and obligations was consistent with the Enlightenment view that right action will follow if one recognises the moral principle. The essential role of relations in moral development was stressed, as left to himself the individual remains egocentric and only develops through contact with the judgment of others. Only children's reasoning and judgement mattered. Psychologists and sociologists are agreed on the influence of peer relationships in the moral development of the child. It is through peer interaction that autonomy develops. For Kant what counted for morality were the agent's intention and whether the act was performed from a sense of rightness. Feelings and emotions do not count if we are to see clearly the rights and wrongs in a situation. Emotions, according to Kant, are directed toward particular persons in particular circumstances and therefore lack the generality and universality that are essential to rational morality.

The central thread of Piaget's theory was that the child makes a series of conceptual adjustments to reality which constitutes stages of moral development, these being closely in parallel with cognitive development. Piaget explored children's responses to moral judgement through the use of stories and constructed his theories about the stages of moral development from these findings. He found from such responses that moral development consisted of two distinct stages, the heteronomous stage and the co-operation and autonomy stage.

2.2.1 The heteronomous stage

In the heteronomous stage of moral thinking authority is supreme and there is a belief that moral codes are dictated by others, that they are non-rational and morality is seen as obedience to a given authority. This is also the egocentric stage where the child takes only his own view and that of authority into account and is not yet aware that the view of others may differ from his own. This stage of moral reasoning is marked by strict adherence to rules and duties and obedience to authority. His subjective perspective is the only one that matters and he is unable as yet to take the perspective of others into account.

For Piaget rules only begin with a consciousness of obligation and the child obeys a rule given by someone whom he respects. Rules for the child of seven are completely sacred and non-negotiable. This is the stage of moral realism, which in essence means regarding duty and the value attaching to it as self-subsistent and independent of the mind. The law must be obeyed regardless of the circumstances in which the individual may find himself. The rule is a given and is external to the mind and the good is defined by obedience (Piaget, 1932, p. 36). The outcome of an action is of more significance than the agent's intentions. Piaget was concerned with how the sense of justice develops, hence much of his analysis was concerned with children's ideas about punishments. Moral realism is also associated with the young child's belief in "immanent justice" (p. 260); this is that wrong-doing will be punished. The younger the child the stronger will be his belief in the rightness and universality of expiatory punishment. The young child feels powerless with all authority resting with adults. Heteronomous moral thinking is in essence a morality of duty where duty is determined by the relevant authority figure. Right is the will of the adult and wrong is to have a will of one's own (p. 193). This phase is also referred to as the morality of constraint, the child obeying the rules or commands given him by the adult. Up until the age of seven or eight, the child finds great difficulty in sticking to the truth and distorts reality without intending to deceive anyone. According to Piaget, he distorts reality according to his desires and his romancing.

Development in moral thinking then entails moving from the egocentric stage where focus is on the self to a focus that considers other points of view and the interests of others. Piaget further refined his stages through observing how children put rules into practice and for him the essence of all morality is to be sought in the respect which the individual acquires for these rules (Piaget, 1932, p. 5). The earliest stage was the motor

phase where the very young child handles the marble and plays outside of the system of rules. Next is the egocentric stage, also outside rules where the child is playing by himself with little consideration of others. At age seven or eight is the stage of incipient cooperation where the child learns to adapt or submit to the wishes of others and participates in the negotiation of rules. The final stage at eleven or twelve marks the consciousness of rules arrived at by mutual agreement.

2.2.2 The co-operation and autonomy stage

Piaget's second stage is one of cooperation and autonomy. In cooperation with others the child's egocentrism yields. He is confronted by the point of view of others and compares it with his own (Piaget, 1932, p. 187). From the age of eight, belief in immanent justice diminishes and the constraint of the adult gives way to cooperation. The social influence is now more apparent. The rules are negotiated and become accepted by mutual agreement. The influence of peers is now seen in the constitution of rules. Rules are not absolute but can be changed if it is agreed that they should be. Tradition is not the deciding factor; rather it is mutual agreement and reciprocity. An ability to differentiate emerges. In the autonomous stage the individual reasons as to whether an action is right or wrong and comes to see fairness in moral actions as taking account of the agent's intentions. This is also the stage where the child can take into account the perspective of others to inform his or her own thinking.

A necessary condition of autonomy appears to be mutual respect. Whereas a rule for the child of seven is sacred and untouchable, only mutual acceptance makes it valid for the child of twelve. Where the child previously attributed moral perfection to his parents, after the age of seven he can face the fact that this is not necessarily so. The child no longer merely obeys the commands given him by the adult but obeys the rule itself. Children's reactions to each other in reciprocal relationships promote the sense of equality. What is just is no longer that which is commanded by the adult and a stage which Piaget terms equalitarianism begins to emerge. It is characterised by a more subtle conception of justice or equity which takes into account the particular needs of the individual. Expiatory punishment is gradually replaced by punishment by reciprocity as solidarity and the desire for equality among children is on the increase. Cheating at games is punished by exclusion for a period of time. As the child gets older the greater is the degree of reciprocity. Whereas in the young child what is wrong is

what contravenes the command of the adult, in the child of eight that link begins to weaken as he increasingly gains autonomy. He begins to have a concept of the inherent rightness of an action. Moral action is sought for its own sake, independently of reward or punishment (Piaget, 1932, p. 315). Only through cooperation and mutual respect can the influence of the adult diminish and autonomy begin to develop.

The older child at eleven to twelve, as he approaches adolescence begins to consider himself in many ways as equal with the adult. With the reciprocal exchange of ideas the child comes to embrace a more refined form of justice concerned with equity and love. Forgiveness takes precedence over revenge. A true sense of morality accords greater importance to rules which transcend the individual and which are arrived at by consensus within the group. Relations of constraint which characterised the adult-child relationship, give way to relations of cooperation. There is what Piaget termed “a coming into consciousness” (Piaget, 1932, p. 408), a conscious realisation which the individual is not capable of achieving by himself. He becomes aware of himself and the functioning of his own mind, of what belongs essentially to him before understanding others. His views are questioned and he must defend his position. Left to himself, the child remains egocentric but through social interaction he becomes conscious of his own and the perspective of others. He is forced to question his own thinking. Through contact with the judgements and evaluations of others egocentrism gradually yields. For Piaget moral development resulted in mutual resolutions which all considered fair. An autonomous view of morality viewed as fairness leads to more consistent behaviour than that held by children at the heteronomous stage. Durkheim (1925) believed that social interaction was crucial to moral development and it was the attachment to the group which fostered the moral sense of the child. Piaget disputed this; participation in a group was not sufficient. He contended that it was through their struggles to arrive at fair solutions that the individual defined his morality.

Piaget contended that cooperation alone leads to autonomy because the very process of socialisation suppresses “moral realism” (“the tendency which the child has to regard duty and the value attaching to it as self-subsistent and independent of the mind...regardless of the circumstances...” p. 106). The child now comes to an interiorization of rules. His morality is now more than obedience out of a sense of duty. The concrete-operational child is limited in his thinking to the facts as he sees them but for the adolescent all possibilities in a situation are considered. His thought is hypothetico-deductive. He has at his disposal a large number of cognitive operations

and can attack a problem from more than one perspective. This is what Piaget calls formal thought (Piaget, 1932, p. 201). The child now becomes capable of directing thoughts not just toward people but at abstract ideals. He can analyse a situation and arrive at a conclusion and at this stage often loses touch with reality. The evidence is that not all adolescents are capable of formal operations, and many adults in non-western countries are not. They depend for their development on a particular experience and cognitive development. According to Piaget, development results in the acquisition of general cognitive structures which make possible meaningful learning. Only when his cognitive structure is sufficiently prepared for it is the child able to profit from and assimilate new experience (p. 219). For Piaget, learning cannot explain development. Instead development explains learning. The child does not just react to his environment but is an active agent in his own development. (p. 221). Piaget was aware of the problems of confusing moral development with intellectual development. Right answers to questions about moral conduct did not necessarily follow through to moral action (Piaget, 1932, p. 116).

Piaget's studies involved mainly boys. From observing how they adhered to or defined rules in the game of marbles, he concluded that the legal sense is far less developed in young girls than in boys. Although fairness, defined as the keeping of the rules of the game, figured largely for the younger boys, the girls saw fairness in terms of sharing. They were more tolerant and more easily reconciled to innovations and far less concerned with legal elaborations. They were more inclined to manage conflict by making exceptions to the rules or ignoring them entirely. Piaget suggests that girls regarded a rule as good as long as the game repaid it. Girls' play was less receptive to formal principles of authority, personal relationships taking precedence over principles of rights and duties (Piaget, 1932, p. 96).

2.2.3 Critics of Piaget's theory

Piaget views development as moving toward objectivity and truth and away from subjectivity and egocentrism. Some of his assumptions on the intellectual processes of children are open to dispute. Lipman (1994, p. 221) contends that the language of children and that of adults are much more similar than Piaget is willing to concede. There are losses as well as gains, impoverishments as well as riches on the path from childhood to adulthood. Piaget's general technique for charting intellectual development

is to map stages of progressive mastering of a concept and then to show that most children of a certain age will be at the same stage. Matthews (1994, p. 222) queries whether one can reasonably suppose that a child will make well-marked progress in the handling of genuine philosophical questions. Matthews sees Piaget as condescending with regard to the philosophical musings of children. His criteria are based on a multiplicity of results and on the comparison of individual reactions (Piaget, 1951, p. 7). Piaget is looking for the same pattern of response in all children. He ignores the atypical or deviant response which is more likely to be philosophically interesting, and eliminates it on methodological grounds. Matthews argues that Piaget's attention is focused on a narrow set of logico-mathematical operations and that he tends to ignore children's fantasy. Puzzlement is ruled out in a world where there is much to learn but nothing to puzzle over (Matthews, 1980, p. 54). The *sauvage* response is discarded as "mere romancing" and the question posed again to obtain a realistic answer that would expose the appropriate developmental stage. In Piaget's charting of the growth in intelligence romance and fantasy are regarded as contaminants. Children can not think philosophically because their thinking is unguided by the constraint of logic and experience. Piaget has a low estimate of rationality in young children; the deficiency in their thinking is something to be corrected at a later stage. Development, according to Piaget, entails overcoming the cognitive deficits of childhood. Matthews contends that children's ability to think philosophically occurs quite independently of the capacities cognitive scientists are interested in (Matthews, 1994, p. 36).

Egan queries whether it is more important to future development, to be able to conserve liquid quantity or an intellectual life "brimming with knights, dragons, witches and star warriors" (Egan, 1988, p. 25). Representing the developmental process as the accumulation of intellectual capacities to be developed focuses attention on what young children lack. Piaget's scheme focuses on the acquisition of forms of thought, logico-mathematical structures characteristic of literate cultures, with a gradual scale of achievement to adulthood. Egan argues that if we were to focus on the thinking techniques of oral peoples, we would get a different developmental picture. Imaginative thinking or Mythic Understanding, according to Egan, peaks very early in western children's lives and then in many cases, begins to decline after about age seven.

The essence of the Piagetian model is that people's behaviour can be explained in terms of psychological structures of mind which are invariant across cultures. Thus the individual mind develops through individual construction of outside reality but

influenced by relations with others. According to Meadows (1993), this idea is challenged by Vygotskian theory. Instead of being individualistic, cognitive abilities are formed in part by social phenomena and are created by interaction with the social environment. Piaget also considered the social environment crucial to the development of autonomy but the emphasis is different. What is important in social interaction is the disagreement between peers on matters of judgment, the consequent disequilibrium leading the individual to reflection and cognitive advance. The Piagetian thinker creates his own individual concepts, derived from his own experience of the logico-mathematical and physical worlds.

Vygotsky, on the other hand, emphasised the primacy of the social world in cognitive development. Ideas and skills are learned socially from more competent partners. The role played by language in Vygotsky's account is crucial to cognitive development. He differed from Piaget on the part played by egocentric speech in the child's development. Far from being a failure to communicate, the child who talks to himself or herself is regulating and planning mental activities. Egocentric speech becomes inner speech for solving problems with the self. It is self-regulation through language and later develops through social interaction into mature verbal thought. Through the mediation of language, the child comes to internalise what he perceives (Meadows, 1993, p. 246). For Piaget, development leads learning. This causal-linear model of development is rejected by Vygotsky. He claims that development is not ahead of learning. Rather the two form a unity (Newman & Holzman, 1993). In Piaget there is a lag of learning behind development. Piaget's stage theory reflects the ideology of individualism, with the relation between the person and the social world conceived as the individual standing apart from and interacting with a social environment. Development in thinking, according to Vygotsky, is not from the individual to the socialised but from the social to the individual.

The Piagetian account of cognitive development has been queried in recent years. It is now widely acknowledged that human cognitive growth is not very stage-like. According to Schweder, Mahapatra, & Miller (1987), no single cognitive stage can adequately characterise a person's cognitive functioning. Current research no longer supports the hypothesis of a major qualitative shift from pre-operational to concrete-operational thought (Gelman & Baillargeon, 1983; Schweder *et al*, 1987). Piaget's contention that morality of constraint or what is forbidden, is experienced through interaction with an adult, while morality of cooperation is experienced through

interaction with peers, is questionable. Observations on discussions about what is allowed and what is forbidden – the morality of constraint – show that argument takes place both with the sibling and with the mother; “the morality of cooperation can be experienced with either mother or sibling or both” (Dunn, 1987, p. 109).

The constructivist approach to learning, that children have their own ways of thinking, mediated by the influence of others, owes much to the insights of Piaget. It is now widely accepted that learning results from the complex interaction between child, adult and the social world.

2.3 Moral stage theory of Lawrence Kohlberg

Piaget’s theory of moral reasoning was taken up by Kohlberg who extended the theory through empirical research and conceptual studies. His initial intention was to replicate Piaget’s (1932) findings with regard to moral judgment stages but he went beyond the ages researched by Piaget, studying children into adolescence and following them through into early adulthood. In doing so, Kohlberg (1978) went beyond Piaget’s two stage process and created a six stage process. In the *pre-conventional stages* (1 and 2) moral thinkers behave appropriately from fear of punishment or in the hope of a reward. In stage 1 it is the physical consequences of an action that determine whether it is good or bad. In stage 2, called the instrumental-relativist orientation, an action is right if it satisfies one’s own needs and sometimes the needs of others. One follows the rules only when it is to one’s advantage. What is right is relative at the pre-conventional level of reasoning.

In the *conventional stages* (3 and 4) one recognises the demands and rules of one’s own culture and shapes one’s behaviour accordingly. People have a basic understanding of conventional morality and reason with an understanding that upholds societal conventions. In stage 3, the interpersonal concordance or *good boy – nice girl* orientation, good behaviour is that which pleases or helps others and is approved by them. Intention is taken into consideration in good behaviour. One earns approval by being nice (Kohlberg, 1978). What is right is determined by the expectations of persons close to oneself. Mutual relationships define what is good. The perspective is that of the local community or family. A generalised social order is not yet a consideration. Stage 4 is the *law and order* orientation. There is respect for authority, fixed rules and maintaining social order for its own sake. Right behaviour consists in doing one’s duty.

In the *post-conventional stages* (5 and 6), also called the autonomous or principled level, one moves beyond the detailed rules of a particular culture and one invokes a universal principle of justice. At this post-conventional level moral values have a validity beyond one's social group or local authority. In stage 5, the social contract or legalistic orientation, right action is concerned with general individual rights and standards which have been critically examined and agreed upon by the whole society. There is an emphasis on the legal point of view but also on the possibility of changing the law if rational considerations demand it. In stage 6, for which Kohlberg has no empirical evidence, the universal-ethical-principle orientation, right is defined by the decision of conscience, in accord with self-chosen ethical principles. There is an awareness of the universal principle of justice, of reciprocity and equality of human rights, and of respect for the dignity of human beings as individual persons as ends in themselves and not solely as means to achieving other values. Stage 6 is the highest and most adequate stage of moral thinking, the one that resolves all moral problems and conflicts ("From Is to Ought", Kohlberg, 1971a, pp. 164-165).

Kohlberg's critics claim his theory does not explain all of moral development but is only concerned with an aspect of it, justice reasoning, a fact which Kohlberg readily conceded in his redefinition of his theory (1984, 1985). At some stage Kohlberg considered adding another stage calling it stage 7 because psychological mechanisms could not wholly account for moral development and that a value stance is necessary allowing religion to play some part. This stage has been mainly discounted by theorists because they do not consider it relevant or that it does not add to his stage theory (Petrovich 1985, p. 85). Stage 7 points toward a religious or holistic orientation in answer to questions that could not be satisfactorily explained by reference to reasoning such as "Why be moral?" Some of his subjects' responses were of a religious nature, mentioning God as a reason for action (Kohlberg, 1981, p. 20). Under Kohlberg's scoring system such responses had to be regarded as immature and discounted. Kohlberg had an ambiguous attitude to religion and did not consider it had an important role to play in moral development. He saw its role as developing religious beliefs and sentiments and not moral character (Kohlberg, 1981, p. 301).

The six stages, describing the development of moral judgment from childhood to adulthood are based empirically on a study of eighty-four boys whose development Kohlberg had followed for a period of over twenty years. The stages are identified not by content – the views expressed – but by form which is the justification of reasons

given by the agent to defend a moral judgment. Kohlberg contends that the higher stages of moral development are qualitatively better than the lower stages, and are more differentiated and integrated because at the higher levels the individual comes to a more satisfactory resolution of problems. The later stages are higher and better because they are more adequate cognitively and therefore morally more adequate. New ideas and new experiences imposed on the individual force him to develop more sophisticated ways of handling his moral environment and function at a higher level of moral reasoning. It is the cognitive conflict and its resolution that causes the shift in thinking and the move from one stage to another in a particular order (Locke, 1985, p. 28). Kohlberg claims that the moral adequacy of his higher stages is backed up by empirical research and this claim to moral adequacy plays a central role in his conception of moral education.

The argument that Kohlberg puts forward in defence of the claim to moral adequacy of the higher stages has never been subjected to serious scrutiny (Siegel, 1985, p. 65). His claim that one stage builds upon another is also contentious. Tomlinson (1985, p. 119) found in his research that respondents were capable of using different stage arguments across various answers and they would also use different stages in a connected way within the same response. For instance they might use a stage 5 argument in defence of Heinz stealing the drug because of everyone's right to life and then add a stage 2 argument thinking that in any case the druggist would make more money if he priced his drug at a more realistic level. In Kohlberg's reckoning a student does not have a sense of fairness unless he can reason at stage 5 or 6 in resolving a moral dilemma. There is evidence of various levels of moral thinking in children as young as four years of age (Williams N. & S., 1970). Matthews contends that the Kohlbergian response focused on only one of the several dimensions of moral development, the adjudication of moral conflicts and ignores all the rest (Matthews, 1994, p. 65). According to Matthews a very young child can have a strong sense of fairness and have an empathic response to suffering and injustice. Wilson contends that Kohlberg's findings tell us nothing about children's understanding. He has merely shown the reasons children give in certain dilemmas to judge a course of action, reasons which are most salient in the regime which controls them at a particular age/stage (Wilson, 1985, p. 230).

Kohlberg, in the rationalist tradition of Kant, emphasised the intellectual and cognitive aspects of morality. In this he has his critics for his over-emphasis on the rational side to the neglect of the emotional. Emotions such as compassion do not merit

treatment in Kohlberg's account of moral reasoning. Emotions are assumed to be irrational and in conflict with the cognitive core of moral development. He believed that the morally good person is the one who reasons and acts on the basis of justice and fairness. An alternative approach, Rich suggests, might be to recognise the cognitive core of the emotions in relation to moral development (Rich 1985, p. 211).

Kohlberg's (1981) claim for universal application of his stage theory is controversial. With its strong western bias and emphasis on rational thinking it is not widely acceptable outside of western culture. Since moral values vary from culture to culture, an invariant sequence in moral judgment is a controversial claim. Many non-western societies do not have the stimulation required to reach the higher stages. He himself found that moral stage development tends to be arrested at lower stages in less developed village cultures; Kohlberg could find no higher than stage 4 in Turkey whereas in highly developed urban societies moral development proceeds to the highest stages, at least in some individuals (Kohlberg 1981, p. 234). Having backed off from some claims about the nature and adequacy of Stage 6, Kohlberg later reduced the number of stages to five, making stage 6 an advanced form of stage 5 (Kohlberg, Levine & Hewer, 1983, p. 60; Kohlberg, 1985, p. 512).

Opportunities for Socratic dialogue are not equal across the world's population of children. Moral thinking seems to be culture-specific. Schweder *et al* (1987, p. 35) contend that the child, through communication with others has not just a conceptual inheritance. Emerging moral consciousness is a product of social practices. For example, the thinking of Indian and American children is much like the thinking of adults in their respective cultures. According to Schweder *et al*, Western cultures, where individualism is the norm, will see freedom, justice and rights as the principled moral standards and guilt as a major moral emotion. Children reason and reflect and have their own modes of thinking but the concepts they reason with may not be totally their own (p. 75). In other cultures where the group is primary, respect for social rules will be the primary moral standards and the fear of the disfavour of others will be the primary emotion.

Schweder *et al* (1987) are critical of Kohlberg's aspiration to a universal morality and his assumption that the highest stage is characterized by autonomy. He sees the content of morality as supplied by the norms of the culture in question, with no higher moral appeal possible or necessary. Kohlberg's Moral Judgment Interview may fail to do justice to a subject's actual competence in moral reasoning because they may be

responding to dilemmas which do not reflect their predominant values. There is a difficulty in non-western countries in getting scorable responses from those whose conception of justice itself is more collectivist (Vine, 1985, p. 443). Kohlberg (1971a) termed the difference in moral judgment of traditional societies compared with modern western societies as one of adequacy in moral judgment. This could be seen as violating the norms of inter-cultural respect (Edwards, 1985, p. 419).

2.3.1 From moral development to moral education

Kohlberg has dominated the field of moral education since the late 1960s. So far I have concentrated on his account of moral development but his research extended to moral education and that is what I will deal with here. His research findings led him to reject the practices of the traditional character education movement which claimed to have Aristotelian philosophy at the core of its thinking. Kohlberg believed a better approach could be devised, linked to his theory of moral development; the way a person organises their thoughts and understanding of the virtues enables them to make a moral choice. Development in the Kohlberg model would not be judged by acquiring more knowledge but would rather consist of a sequence of qualitative changes in the way an individual thinks (Nucci, 2002). His stage theory, charting the growth of moral judgment competence in six stages has had, in spite of criticism, dominant influence until recent times. He contended that classroom discussion of the moral dilemma, guided by developmental teaching led to a higher level of moral reasoning. Kohlberg's aim was to explore moral judgment change by applying developmental principles to a programme of moral education.

The Kohlberg-Blatt (1975) approach consisted of one-hour teacher-guided discussion per week for the duration of twelve weeks, stimulating the next step of development and presenting modes of thought one step above the child's own. Socratic discussion helped the students to clarify not only their own values but also to defend their beliefs as to why one answer was better than another. The children were tested at the outset to ascertain their level of moral reasoning and at the end of twelve weeks each child was given a test in the form of the Moral Judgment Interview and then classified into a stage of moral development depending on his or her responses. The approach defines the aim of moral education as the stimulation of the next step of development rather than indoctrination into the fixed conventions of the society. Development is not only

stimulated by exposure to the next level of thought but also by the experience of conflict in trying to resolve problematic situations (Blatt & Kohlberg, p. 130). The essential rationale was to expose the children to cognitive conflict about moral reasoning and an awareness of other points of view and exposure to judgments one stage above their own.

The optimal age for moral dilemma discussion was considered to be between ages 10 and 16. Kohlberg claims that the results indicate that an educational programme incorporating such methods was able to speed up natural developmental trends in moral development. Passive exposure to the next stage up would not have the same effect. Kohlberg envisioned an active role for the teacher as leader of focused moral discussion. He would not allow for the teacher taking a lesser role, claiming that his moral dilemma discussion (led by the teacher with specific guidelines to expose the child to a higher level of moral thought) led to more change than is found in either free unstructured discussions or in didactic forms of moral education (Blatt & Kohlberg, 1975, p. 153).

There is a degree of support for the moral dilemma discussion as a method for fostering moral development in adolescents. Methods like value indoctrination and moral behaviour drills have been found to be less effective (Lind, 1996a). However it is questionable whether moral dilemma discussion is complete in itself and whether real life situations rather than hypothetical situations are not a better starting point for stimulating moral reasoning in children. A criticism of Kohlberg's theory is that it seems to favour those who can verbalise their reasons for preferring one course of action over another and takes no account of tacit or implicit knowledge (Schweder *et al*, 1987). It is doubtful whether a person's verbalisation of a moral judgment is enough to classify him or her as being at a particular stage of moral development.

Research by Berkowitz (1982) and Berkowitz & Gibbs (1983) into the effectiveness of moral discussion in the classroom raises some doubts about the finer points of Kohlberg's method in favour of more interactional patterns. Kohlberg claims that advances in moral judgment are aided by teacher statements one stage above the moral reasoning level of the children (Blatt & Kohlberg, 1975). According to Nucci (1987), not only are such statements difficult to generate and therefore rare in classroom discussions, including those conducted by trained experts, but they seem far less relevant to changes in moral reasoning than statements by peers. The research by Berkowitz and his colleagues suggests that teachers serve less as instruments for direct intervention than as agents for the facilitation of peer discussion. Berkowitz and his

associates identified forms of student statements, which they called transacts that are related to moral development. In a transact the listener makes an effort to integrate the speaker's statements into his own framework before making a response. Listener behaviour was not considered a positive contribution to moral discussion where the listener either engages in monologue or restates the speaker's argument. The best results were obtained when the problems selected for discussion generated the most disagreement. However, researchers are not unanimous on this. These methods could be considered more effective with older children.

Damon and Killen (1982) cautioned against the use of conflict situations with young children. They found that social conflict tended to retard rather than promote change in children under eight years of age. For young children the best contexts for development were situations where they could resolve problems through conciliation and cooperation. Younnis (1980, p. 81) found that moral development in young children occurs through co-construction rather than through argumentation or passive withdrawal.

2.3.2 The judgment-action debate

Kohlberg's critics claim he adheres too rigidly to the Piagetian model with its excessive focus on justice reasoning which does not adequately describe moral development. He is criticised for being more concerned with moral reasoning than with behaviour and being loathe to recognise that right thinking might not translate into right action (Gates, 1985, p. 299). According to Kohlberg, one finds out what a person's principles are, not by studying how he or she actually behaves but by analysing and interpreting his or her verbal responses to hypothetical dilemmas. He saw merit in moral dilemma discussions because he believed that moral judgment influences action. The higher the stage of reasoning, the more likely one is to reason in terms of principles rather than rules and to act in accordance with one's moral judgments. Moral judgments are about the right and good of action (Kohlberg, 1981, p. 301). Yet, this explanation fails to explain why many individuals at the lower stages act consistently (Clark Power, 1997). Although one's principles can give an indication of how one is likely to act there is no guarantee that one will follow through on intention.

The issue here concerns the gap between judgement and action or what in traditional discussion, going back to Aristotle, has been referred to as *akrasia* or weakness of will

(Book 7 of NE). Kohlberg's theory is open to challenge due to the gap or "weakness of will" between judgments and action. Reasons for action of a justifying kind do not always provide us with reasons for action of a motivating kind. There is more to moral behaviour than conformity to rules. Discussion of hypothetical dilemmas lack direct emotional experience of a situation which is necessary if one is participating as a moral agent (Straughan, 1985, p. 101). Kohlberg's argument is that moral reasoning is a better test to predict moral action. Each higher stage is more predictive of moral action, impelling one from *I ought* to *I will*. He is less concerned with moral action than with moral choice and the cognitive dispositions that inform it.

Kohlberg (1984) took the notion of responsibility into consideration in his later deliberations on the judgment-action question. He now acknowledged that moral action requires two kinds of judgment: a deontic judgment about the rightness or wrongness of a particular course of action and an aretaic or responsibility judgment about whether one should follow through. He described a moral principle as a rule of choosing and also a rule of action. Blasi (1980, 1983) speculates that the bridge from judgment to action is through responsibility. The individual's will to action is aroused when one is obligated to act and the impetus to act one way or another depends to some degree on the kind of person one thinks one is and wishes to become. He contended that individuals are more likely to feel responsible to act morally if moral concerns are crucial for their self-definition. Kohlberg (1984, 1985) and his Harvard colleagues revised their research definition from the study of moral development to its more restricted form, the study of moral judgment as embodied in judgments of justice. Moral development is concerned with all aspects of human action but the development of justice reasoning was Kohlberg's central focus; he later came to recognise that the rational discussion approach should be part of a broader approach involving students in the moral and social function of schools. Durkheim's vision of creating a moral society in the classroom appealed to him (Power, Higgins and Kohlberg, 1989b).

2.3.3 The Just Community approach

Although the ability to reason logically is a necessary condition for morality, it is not sufficient. Moral development results from an increasing ability to perceive social reality and to integrate social experience. Kohlberg recognised from early on that although moral dilemma discussions were crucial to moral development, moral

education needed to include experiences for students to act as moral agents within a community. The year 1978 marked a change in emphasis for Kohlberg's moral education programme. He revised his theory to account more adequately for experience and better explain the school's role in moral education. His earlier experience of education in the Kibbutz led him to believe that an effective school must impact on students' actions and not just their reasoning. The Just Community approach to moral education evolved out of experimental secondary school programmes, and functioned as schools within schools. Kohlberg saw this approach as a more effective way of stimulating principled moral reasoning. The Just Community schools aimed at developing the basic elements of morality as Durkheim described and were in keeping with the Aristotelian process of habituation in the virtues. In the Just Community schools Kohlberg encouraged the practice of democratic decision-making, fostering a sense of community. The focus of moral education became the group rather than the individual and real-life dilemmas rather than hypothetical ones were at the centre of discussion. As a result of his Just Community experiments Kohlberg later entertained a far more sympathetic approach to the teaching of virtue (Kohlberg 1981, pp. 2-3). Cognitive developmental researchers are now beginning to examine the development of virtues within a cognitive developmental framework (Clark Power, 1997).

Kohlberg developed the Just Community schools approach with the intention of offering students the opportunity to participate in democratic community. The primary purpose of this approach was not just to enhance moral reasoning but to affect students' actions. The key institution in this approach is the community meeting where the group meets to draw up rules and policies that concern the members and particularly to define policy in response to particular disciplinary problems (Power, Higgins, and Kohlberg, 1989a). The stress was on collective responsibility and in two of the Just Community programmes stealing virtually ended when members decided that the community would make restitution for thefts. While researchers acknowledged that the moral dilemma discussion was of great significance to teachers, the latter did not continue to use this approach in the classroom when the researchers had left. Kohlberg wryly observed that although the operation was successful the patient died. Teachers cited pressure to follow a curriculum and irrelevance as reasons. The evidence would suggest that teachers do not see the goals and methods of Kohlbergian moral education as essential or compatible with their lives as teachers (Leming, 1985, p. 252). The Just Community approach has been used largely in alternative school settings and primarily with

alienated or disruptive youth. Most mainstream schools would not consider it because it would entail a revolution in the thinking of teachers concerning the function of the school and a challenge to administrators concerning structural reorganisation (Leming, 1985, p. 253).

Other theorists differ with Kohlberg in his claim to a single comprehensive moral theory. The domain theory of Elliot Turiel (1983) and his colleagues differentiates morality from matters of social convention. A distinction is drawn between the child's developing concepts of morality and social convention. Conventions are arbitrary and are concerned with actions which are neither inherently right nor wrong whereas the moral domain is not arbitrary. The moral domain is concerned with issues of justice, human welfare and rights, and stems from factors intrinsic to action such as consequences that could harm others (Nucci, 1989, p. 184). In contrast to Kohlberg, Turiel claims that morality and convention are distinct parallel frameworks, needing to be approached differently in practice. Values education, he argues, should not be reduced solely to concerns of moral development. Cultural tolerance and understanding would necessitate a respect for convention, rather than that it be treated as a subset of morality as in Kohlberg's theory. Domain theory aims at the development of both the student's moral reasoning and concepts of social convention. Kohlberg's response is that the moral domain cannot be as neatly delineated as Turiel and Nucci suggest. The development of communal norms to take the place of conventional norms entails a kind of moralizing. So also can conventional norms be moralized by making them communal (Power, Higgins & Kohlberg, 1989a).

2.4 The Particularist Position

2.4.1 The care versus justice debate

Kohlberg's critics reacted to the fundamental assumptions of his impartialist view, objecting to it on the grounds that it does not take enough account of the moral virtues. They argue that virtues such as kindness, compassion and courage have as much significance as do qualities of justice, duty and adherence to moral principles. Gilligan (1982) contends that Kohlberg's conception of adulthood is out of balance, favouring the separateness of the individual self over connection to others. Stage theory, having as its basis the universal principle of justice and the capacity for autonomous thinking, is associated with masculinity. The research instrument, the Moral Judgment interview is,

she argues, biased against females, with males reasoning from a predominantly justice position and females employing predominantly care reasoning. In favouring the separateness of the individual over connectedness with others, it does not encompass women's ways of thinking (Gilligan, 1982, p. 17). Gilligan's claim is that the interdependence of love and care are not taken account of and that the justice motivation does not concern itself with particular persons or particular needs. Kohlberg's response to this is that considerations of particularity such as care and beneficence are aspects of morality in which justice is central (Kohlberg, 1984, pp. 231-232).

Gilligan offered a morality of care, based on listening to women's experiences, in the place of Kohlberg's justice theory. In her view, the morality of caring and responsibility is premised on non-violence, while justice morality is based on equality. Interconnectedness is central to morality of care and is associated more with girls because of their early identification with their mothers. The morality of justice on the other hand is associated with the interactions of autonomous individuals. Masculine identity entails early separation from the mother. Gilligan contends that this separation makes boys more aware of difference in power relations between themselves and the adult and hence they tend to have more concerns over inequalities. Masculinity is defined through separation while femininity is defined through attachment. Male gender identity is threatened by intimacy while female gender identity is threatened by separation (Gilligan, 1982, p. 8).

While many would disagree with Gilligan's core theory she has highlighted the importance of care in moral reasoning and its omission from Kohlberg's theory. Gilligan's conception of moral development centres round the understanding of responsibility and relationships. Her claim is that women are systematically underestimated by Kohlberg's system because of their different construction of the moral problem. Kohlberg's highest stages of moral reasoning centre round a reflective understanding of human rights. The morality of rights with its emphasis on separation rather than on connection, differs from the morality of responsibility, according to Gilligan. Her claim is that women order human experience according to different priorities and have a more contextual mode of judgment (Gilligan, 1982, p. 19). In the Heinz dilemma, two eleven-year-old children see two different moral problems. Jake sees the conflict as between life and property whereas Amy sees a fracture in human relationship. Gilligan (1982; Brown & Gilligan, 1992) sees the justice theory as failing to take account of women's experience and is concerned by women losing their voices

and the mysterious disappearance of the female self in adolescence. In early adolescence girls can become disconnected from what they are feeling and experience a loss of authentic relationship (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 169). Empathy and compassion are at the centre of women's judgments and, according to Brown and Gilligan, their concern is more with the real than with the hypothetical dilemma; women have a different way of constituting the self and a different idea of what is moral. Since Kohlberg's research is derived mainly from a study of masculine moral reasoning, failure of development is seen as divergence from the masculine standard.

In Kohlberg's scoring system the thinking of women is often classified with that of children, the results being sex-biased against a moral orientation based on care. Gilligan stresses the necessity for defining criteria that encompass the categories of women's thought and the inclusion of the feminine voice in any developmental theory (Gilligan, 1982, p. 105). Since women's voices have been heard through a filter that renders them incoherent it was difficult for men to understand women. For her there is a dissonance between established psychological theory and women's experience:

The disparity between women's experience and the representation of human development, noted throughout the psychological literature, has generally been seen to signify a problem in women's development. Instead, the failure of women to fit existing models of human growth may point to a problem in the representation, a limitation in the conception of the human condition, an omission of certain truths about life (Gilligan, 1982, p. 2).

Gilligan speaks about a different voice that is identified not by gender but by theme, a different way of constituting the self and morality, a theme that is different from Kohlberg's justice theme even though her research evidence reveals a stronger link with women than with men. The different voice and its association with women, Gilligan (1982, p. 2) claims, are confirmed by empirical observation and it is primarily through women's voices that she traces its development. Theories of moral development have tended to overlook the implications of attachment relationships and she rejects Kohlberg's implication that the care ethic can be reduced to an aspect of morality conceived as justice (Gilligan & Wiggins, 1987, p. 295).

Gilligan's interest lay in the way people defined moral problems and her research methods centred on first-person accounts of moral conflict in real-life situations. Her findings led her to conclude that the justice and care orientations organise thinking about moral problems in different ways. Boys and men, although they introduce

considerations of care, tend to define and resolve moral problems within the justice framework. The focus on care in moral reasoning is a characteristically female phenomenon, although not characteristic of all women. Kohlberg's psychology was defined by male perceptions about what is of value and does not incorporate women's way of knowing. Concern for particular situations rather than abstract principles is characteristic of the morality of women and, according to Gilligan, constitutes a superior moral orientation (in Braebeck, 1993). What Kohlberg measures are cognitive judgments rather than decisions that effect action in real life situations. Gilligan's aim, according to Braebeck (p. 48), was to interpret the difference in the two perspectives and rather than rejecting Kohlberg's theory, she sought to supplement it with one grounded in responsiveness to others and with concern for particular moral situations.

2.4.2 Response to Gilligan

Kohlberg finally admitted that Gilligan's challenge was more cogent than he had at first conceded. He acknowledged that the emphasis on justice in his work did not fully reflect all that is recognised as being part of the moral domain (Kohlberg, Levine & Hewer, 1983). Although he conceded that his theory is not comprehensive, he continued to promote a restricted conception of morality and called for an understanding of his theory as a rational reconstruction of justice reasoning (Kohlberg, Levine & Hewer, 1983, p. 19).

Braebeck (1993) calls for an enlarged conception of morality that integrates justice and care. There are many who think that notions of justice and care overlap more than Gilligan admits, and that morally adequate care involves considerations of justice. Mature reasoning about moral issues, Friedman argues, incorporates considerations of justice and care (Friedman, 1993, p. 264). Friedman questions the moral adequacy of either orientation dissociated from the other. She calls for a non-gendered, non-dichotomised moral framework incorporating all moral concerns; commitments to particular persons and to rules and principles are not mutually exclusive.

The Kohlberg scale was constructed to capture responses to a limited class of moral problems. Walker (1984) found no statistically significant gender differences in analysis responses measured on this scale. He refutes Gilligan's claims of sex bias in Kohlberg's theory and concludes that there is little evidence to support her claim that stage 3 is modal for women and stage 4 for men. Gilligan further maintains that the fact

that the main protagonists in Kohlberg's dilemmas were male could be a factor in females not identifying with them. She is willing to concede that there are no gender differences in justice reasoning tests, but since justice reasoning is only one part of morality, Kohlberg's findings do not address the issue of gender difference in *moral* reasoning (Gilligan 1986c, p. 328). One may wonder whether the small size of Gilligan's sample could be considered adequate to justify her characterisations. Eight males and eight females of different ages do not constitute a sufficient number to draw a general conclusion about all males and females. The samples drawn from classes in moral development at Harvard University would not be representative of students in general.

Flanagan (1991) criticizes Gilligan's binary conception of morality which does not take account of the diversity of moral personalities. There are a variety of good moral personalities, far more than the two postulated by Gilligan. Every problem can be construed from either a care or justice orientation. There is a need to listen to voices other than primarily white middle-class women. Her claim is that the justice orientation dominates moral thinking in developmental research and that dominance is gender linked. According to Flanagan (1991, p. 200), most people use both orientations some of the time when discussing moral problems. The type or content of moral problem can influence the choice of solution and is a far greater predictor of orientation used than is gender. The standard Kohlbergian dilemmas, such as the Heinz dilemma, generate the highest number of justice responses in both sexes. Walker, Devries & Trevethan (1987) found that neither males nor females consistently focused from the perspective of a single orientation to anything like the degree Gilligan claims. The contention of Walker *et al* is that more personal dilemmas are likely to elicit a care response, and impersonal ones a justice or rights response. Most people use a mix of orientations depending on the context.

Education may have a greater role to play than gender in moral judgment. The care ethic seems to be dominant in societies where girls have a nurturing role. Damon (1990, p. 90) sees a gender difference in children's approach to morality and he attributes this to the different ways in which boys and girls are treated when they are young. Social experience is, he claims, the crucial factor. Gender difference in moral orientation can, according to Damon, disappear if circumstances change. This contention is at variance with Gilligan's (1982) claim for developmental differences between the sexes. Different

ways in which separation and connection are experienced would, according to Gilligan, mean a different self-concept and a different voice in defining it (See 2.4.1 above).

2.4.3 The broader picture: the particularist view

The upshot of the previous discussion is that one cannot reduce morality to care and impartiality. What about virtues, not wholly accounted for under either framework such as honesty, courage and compassion? The impartialist view does not address the question of character or the role of the group in the wider community. Thinking of morality in terms of frameworks or orientations is only part of the story (Blum, 1994). There is little sense in Gilligan that care and justice could overlap. Hers is a binary conception of morality with no recognition of any other concrete possibilities entertained (Blum, 1994, p. 241). Blum attributes importance to group moral identity as having a moral dimension or voice distinct from both justice and care. Care morality, according to Blum is not limited to women. The impartialist view is concerned only with justice reasoning but morality is broader than this. Blum argues that morally significant group identities, such as those of gender, ethnicity or institutional identification provide moral orientations and forms of understanding that are distinct from both individual and universal principles of justice.

The purely cognitive is not sufficient because it does not ensure the altruistic concern for the other. We need to get beyond the over-cognitive approach and consider attitudes, sentiments and emotions. Kohlberg saw no such need. For him justice was sufficient because it encompassed all other virtues. Moral responsiveness to others is mediated by adherence to principle. He saw justice as a prerequisite for care because there must be conditions of social justice if personal virtues associated with both justice and care are to flourish. In his 6th stage Kohlberg (1981, p. 356) claims the integration of justice and care forms a single moral principle. His contention is that the two orientations converge at the highest point because the principle of “persons as ends” is common to both.

According to MacIntyre (1981) values or virtues are not grounded in universal principles but in particular circumstances. He sees the whole of morality in terms of virtues grounded in the practice and way of life of particular communities. Hume (1751, 1957) contended that moral judgment ultimately depends on empathy and that the moral judgments we make about others may be guided by empathy. His claim was that empathy provided the ultimate basis for the moral judgments we make about others.

This view is echoed by Hoffman (1994, p. 164) who has long suggested a link between empathy, moral principles and judgment. The arousal of empathy should activate moral principles and thus directly or indirectly have an effect on moral judgment and reasoning. Hoffman recommends a moral education curriculum that stresses the common humanity of all people and encourages empathy for those outside or on the margins of the group. Empathic socialization begins in early childhood (Hoffman, 1982b) but it is not until late childhood or early adolescence that children are able to comprehend the meaning of moral principles. Then they can be receptive to principles of caring, equality and justice. People are, according to Hoffman, disposed to select from the moral principles available in society those that fit their empathic dispositions.

Flanagan questions whether one could teach children about fairness if one did not first teach them about kindness and sensitivity to the interests of others. These virtues support each other because “instruction in both sensitivity and compassion and principles of fairness, turn taking and sharing occur in large part together” (Flanagan, 1991, p. 226). Kohlberg overemphasises justice and fairness and underestimates many goods which play important roles in the moral lives of most individuals. According to Flanagan, morality is mischaracterized when it is treated as a unitary subject matter requiring a unitary set of problem-solving skills. Noddings considers a focus on moral reasoning to be misplaced and considers that moral knowledge is insufficient for moral behaviour. She reckons that the ethic of care should be the primary focus of moral education because of its emphasis on motivation, skills and attitudes required to sustain caring relations (Noddings, 1992, p. 21). Ultimately, it is not a question of choice between care and justice. The best promise for a satisfactory conception of moral maturity would, according to Carr & Steutal (1999, p. 181) be an approach in which care, justice and other virtues within the idea of community are emphasised.

Taylor (1989, 1991) describes a moral outlook guided by commitments to integrity, to perfection and to liberation which cannot be assimilated into Kohlberg’s or Gilligan’s theories. Traits such as courage and moderation do not have any very clear links to either orientation. He decries the narrowness of an obligation-focused philosophy, concerned with what one ought to do rather than what it is good to be or what it is good to love. Ethics involves more than what we are obliged to do. It also involves what it is good to be. What is good to be is clarified by becoming more aware of what is noble or admirable about the human potential (Taylor, 1996, p. 12). In the neo-Kantian philosophy of Kohlberg, Taylor takes issue with the exaltation of justice-benevolence

over issues of fulfilment and the good life. This view is also echoed by Murdoch (1970) who sees the dichotomy as the primacy of instrumental reason versus responding to something beyond the self – the transcendence of the good. (This issue raised lightly here will be returned to in more depth in the next chapter).

2.5 Traditional character education movement

The area of moral education is bedevilled by a variety of terms that have come into usage. The terms different countries use for moral education can lead to confusion, particularly in Great Britain and the United States. The most widely used are *values education*, *character education*, and *moral education*. For many others it is *citizenship education* or *civic education*. In some cases there is overlap; in others basic differences in philosophical approaches underlie them. There are fundamental differences in the philosophical approaches of different schools of thought on how future good citizens are to be raised and educated (Bennet, 1992; Kohlberg & Mayer, 1972; Piaget, 1965; Wynne & Ryan, 1993). The traditional character education movement is among Kohlberg's most vocal critics. Prominent in this movement is William Bennet (1993) whose best known work is *The Book of Virtues*, a collection of classical moral stories for children. Bennet criticizes those who would educate children to judge and evaluate moral matters critically. His stories incorporate societal values and foster traits of character which are traditionally valued by society. Virtues are transmitted through good example and discipline and the stories are a central part of this approach to moral education. The traditional character education approach is fundamentally opposed to the cognitive developmental one. Kohlberg (1981, p. 2) referred to it as the "bag of virtues" school of thought, embracing the idea of habituation without taking due account of the reflection which characterises it in the Aristotelian sense. According to the traditional approach, virtues such as honesty, truthfulness, strength, kindness etc., are the basis of moral behaviour. The teacher teaches the virtues by example and direct teaching. In this approach the incorporation of societal values are central to character development and character education. It sees children as self-centred, needing formation and needing to reach out beyond themselves (Nucci, 1989).

Bennet (in Power, Higgins & Kohlberg, 1989b) considers the work of Kohlberg as mis-education because of the emphasis on children's choices, decisions, deliberations

and judgments. He has criticized educators for “intellectualising moral values” and suggests that they develop virtues through habituation. In response to this charge Kohlberg contends that Aristotle never lost sight of the cognitive dimension of moral education, even as he distinguished habituation from teaching (Power, Higgins & Kohlberg, 1989b, p. 142). Bennet’s approach stresses the teaching of content emphasising traditional values and virtues whereas for Kohlberg, content is but a means to an end. Each accuses the other of relativistic views. According to Nucci (2001), the debate is mainly between the idea that the acquisition of morality involves an acceptance of societal standards and norms and the idea that it involves the development of ways of thinking about right and wrong or good and bad. It is also Nucci’s view that unlike the character education approach, the strength of Kohlberg’s (1981) approach lies in its basis in developmental research and in its substantive definitions and analysis of moral development.

Power, Higgins & Kohlberg (1989b, p. 126) contend that Bennet’s proposals appear weak in comparison to the Just Community approach which sees character development through participation in a democratic community. While Bennet sees behaviour shaped through authority and discipline, Kohlberg promotes moral reasoning and responsibility through the experience of participation in democratic structures. The traditional character education model relies more on external controls and standards (Wynne & Ryan, 1993) while the Kohlbergian Just Community model tends to focus on cooperative democratic methods that empower students (Power *et al*, 1989b). The traditionalists criticize moral development approaches based on moral developmental research for failing to emphasize the role of habit, direct instruction and authority in the formation of character. This criticism is not entirely justified. Developmental moral educators have over time, and in light of the Just Community experience, come to recognise the importance of promoting responsibility and not simply reasoning. Cognitive developmental researchers have begun to examine the development of virtues within a cognitive developmental framework. Kohlberg, in his later research, had a far more sympathetic view of the Aristotelian approach to the teaching of virtue as a result of his Just Community experiments (Kohlberg, 1981, pp. 2-3). He saw virtues as patterns or habits of action accompanied by requisite reasons and feelings (Clark Power, 1997). The Just Community approach could be called an apprenticeship model of character education. Aristotle’s conception of character and virtue includes the

cognitive component, *phronesis* or practical wisdom, as well as the behavioural component, habit. The habituation process includes an emphasis on students' reasoning, judgment and emotions. The community itself motivates moral responsibility, contributing to character development.

Bennet (1992), Etzioni (1993) and Kirkpatrick (1992) are critical of contemporary American culture because of its focus on individualism and over emphasis on rights and too little attention to collective norms and traditions. Nucci (2001, p. 74), viewing the debate as a balance between what is personal as opposed to societal, contends that morality and personal freedom are interdependent rather than oppositional features of human development. Lakoff (1996) sees the character education movement of Bennet and his associates as having a conservative political agenda, with family values and fatherhood central to conservative politics. He refers to it as the Strict Father Model in which children build character and self-reliance by respect and obedience to their parents. In contrast to this Lakoff depicts the liberal approach, the Nurturant Parent Model in which the obedience of children comes not from fear of punishment but out of love and respect for their parents and their community. Children's questioning is seen as positive (Lakoff, 1996, p. 34). Lakoff argues that the traditional moral values of Bennet are the values of Strict Father Morality or political conservatism. He further contends that the Traditional Character Education approach is not supported by any modern research on child development. The *Book of Virtues*, he claims, omits nurturance, tolerance of deviants, open-mindedness, self-questioning and contains no section on modern moral issues, such as rights of minorities or the protection of consumers and the environment. Promoting discussion among children, according to Lakoff, prompts them to think for themselves rather than merely obeying authority. The Nurturant Parent Model promotes independent thinking by engaging children in dialogue. They will become socially responsible by openly discussing reasons for what they are being told to do and how their actions will affect other people (Lakoff, 1996, p. 357).

2.5.1 Integration of different perspectives

Berkowitz (1998) suggests that asking which theory is right is asking the wrong question. It is not simply a choice between a single right theory and a set of wrong ones. Rather, the question should be how best to explain and influence moral growth, given all the available knowledge and theoretical perspectives. The challenge, according to

Berkowitz, is to sift through what each approach has to offer, find the commonalities and adjudicate between the discrepancies. This would seem a better approach than the outright rejection of seemingly opposing theories. Likona (1983, 1991) advocates integrating Kohlbergian structuralism with character education. There are efforts at integration and one of the most notable of these is the Child Development Project which began in San Ramon, California (Watson, Solomon, Battistich, Schaps & Solomon, 1989) but has now moved to Oakland. This project (CDP) has a theoretical perspective that overlaps in part with the traditional and the cognitive-developmental perspectives. Like the Just Community schools this programme has opportunities for children to develop the capacity for moral reasoning and includes experiences which help them to take the perspectives of others, valuing people equally and respecting individual difference. At the same time it incorporates instruction, role-modelling and habituation, thus blending the central aspects of both traditional and developmental approaches. The teaching of values is stressed but unlike the indoctrination approach, teaching is in the cognitive-developmental manner, helping children to analyse and evaluate critically. There is a belief that children can be intrinsically motivated to value the social norms of the group without promise of a reward or fear of punishment. The CDP school of thought aims at the development of an internalised commitment to a pro-social moral code (Watson *et al*, 1989, p. 87).

Both the Just Community and the CDP approaches stress the importance of adults guiding children in developing moral values but there are differences in emphases. The cognitive-developmental approach focuses on the importance of adults promoting autonomy and justice in children, while the CDP in addition stresses the importance of adult caring. The two approaches differ also on the role of peer interaction. For cognitive-developmentalists such interaction is crucial to the development of autonomous morality. For the CDP on the other hand, while peer interaction plays a significant role, adult-child interaction assumes primary importance, at least for young children. Although the CDP has had positive outcomes and the future looks promising, Watson and his colleagues (1989) considered that much was still unknown about its effectiveness in character education. A recent study by Battistich, Schaps, Watson, Solomon & Lewis (2000) of CDP effectiveness reported success in drug prevention and a reduction in behaviour problems, violence and substance use. Schaps (2005), one of the founding members, claims that results of evaluations of CDP indicate that students' interpersonal classroom behaviour, problem-solving skills, and commitment to certain

democratic values were enhanced. He further claims that findings indicate achievement of a self-other balance, and that positive effects on self-esteem and conflict resolution were found two years after pupils had left their elementary school.

2.6 Conclusion

Recent research on moral development owes much to Piaget's analysis of children's thinking and understanding. Piaget's constructivist approach to learning, emphasising the importance of social interaction in cognitive development, was a forerunner of today's concept of child-centred learning. In recent years the impartialist conception of Kant, Piaget and Kohlberg which characterizes justice morality over several decades has been challenged by particularist positions. Rational acceptance is no longer considered sufficient to motivate moral action. That there is one unitary moral point of view rooted in impartial universal principles guiding the moral agent is disputed most notably by the care theory of Gilligan, Blum's theory of moral responsiveness, and Hoffman's contention that emotions and sentiments are the basis of morality. Kohlberg's initial theory of moral development underwent change in the 1980s, becoming refined to a theory of justice reasoning in moral decision-making. It is not essentially a theory of moral character but it is a theory of how people make mature moral judgements. The Just Community schools were an attempt to see justice reasoning in action in democratic communities.

Debate in recent times about what theory is best has seen opposing theories with fundamentally different approaches to moral education. Traditional character education proponents such as Wynne (1986) argue that the emphasis in moral education should be on influencing moral behaviour and not states of mind. They are opposed to the cognitive developmental approach of Kohlberg and see the fostering of reasoning, autonomous choice and decision making as essentially erroneous in a theory of moral education (Bennet, 1980a, p. 30). According to Turiel (1989), such a vision of moral education sees the examined life as corrupting (p. 177). Attempts at consensus in recent years (Berkowitz, 1998; Likona, 1983) have seen some agreement about the importance of integration. Most experts now favour a variety of approaches to character development. The Child Development Project in California (Watson *et al*, 1989) goes some way in bridging the gap between traditional character education and cognitive structuralism, combining the core aspects of the both approaches.

3 ISSUES IN MORAL EDUCATION

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will identify the significant issues in moral education, what a theory of moral education has to take account of and what is crucial in an adequate theory. Some very basic philosophical issues are implicit in the debate on moral education. Different protagonists are in some way rehearsing positions that are not just relevant to education but to morality itself. The main philosophical theories of morality that could currently influence moral education are Kantian liberalism, virtue ethics and mainstream communitarianism, and the ethics of care. Liberal theories, with which cognitive-developmental approaches have been mainly associated, encourage the development of the capacities of moral reasoning and the intellectual aspects of moral understanding. Rational autonomy and principles of obligation, deriving largely from Kant are stressed. The primacy accorded to moral reasoning in the Kantian approaches is challenged both by virtue ethicists – who see the child's environment – community, schools, parents – as central to inculcating good character through the habitual practice of the virtues – and by ethicists of care who emphasise emotional development, within the context of interpersonal relations, and who locate the self in networks where one is a giver or receiver of care. The ethic of care has been given impetus by certain recent strands of feminist theory. Virtue ethics, associated with contemporary communitarianism and rooted in the Aristotelian tradition, emphasises character education approaches and focus mainly on behaviour shaping and training.

Advances in psychology of moral development (Kohlberg, 1981) meant that the substantive content of moral education became less important than the processes of moral decision-making. The Kohlbergian model, unique in the 1970s with its freedom from the restrictions of community values and its emphasis on justice reasoning, and occupying centre-stage for most of two decades, no longer dominates the moral education domain. Moral education now seems to involve more than making choices and there is widespread recognition of the need for reflection on the nature of moral virtues. Character education has come back in favour and from the perspective of virtue ethics some theorists think it has much to commend it (Noddings & Slote, 2003). Some modern character educators see the value of the role of reason in Kohlberg's model but

reject the theory as a whole because of its perceived lack of moral content (Likona, 1991).

3.2 The moral self

Different approaches tend to disagree on the basic nature of the moral person and such disagreement at the level of different goals for moral formation leads to different emphases with regard to methods. What characterises a good child? Is the good child docile and obedient or inquisitive and challenging? Berkowitz contends that understanding the nature of the moral person involves going beyond Kohlberg's education for moral reasoning and educating for the other components that make up the moral person such as emotion and behaviour. One requires moral emotions such as guilt and compassion in addition to moral reasoning to decide what is right or wrong in a given situation. One's moral identity, a self-reflective and evaluative sense of the self, gives one a sense of being a morally adequate person (Berkowitz, 1997, p. 8). The most effective models of character education are, according to Berkowitz, those that recognize the complexity of human moral nature and attempt to be multi-faceted in their approaches. Moving beyond the cognitive developmental paradigm means seeking more adequate ways of understanding what it means to be a moral self.

A person's moral judgements do not determine the place that morality occupies in that person's life. Moral behaviour depends on something beyond the moral beliefs in and of themselves. It depends in part on the importance of moral concerns to an individual's sense of self as a person (Colby & Damon, 1993 p. 152). Blasi stresses the role of biography in self-understanding and moral conduct. Moral responsibility must be integrated in one's identity or sense of self. One's actions need to be consistent with one's sense of self and since moral identity plays a central role, self-consistency is the basic motivational spring of moral action (Blasi, 1993, p. 99).

3.2.1 Moral motivation

Why be moral? Reason alone cannot address this question. Morality relates to what a person really is, to the very essence of the individual. Making moral choices is guided by a different principle than that of mere judgement. According to Nisan (1993, p. 262) it is generally after making a judgement as to the morality of an act that one feels it is

necessary to make a moral choice. He contends that moral judgement alone does not require much of the self; moral maturity needs the capacity to make complex judgements *and* to take appropriate action. Kohlberg himself maintained that there is a higher degree of consistency between moral judgement and moral action as the level of moral judgement increases. For Kant, rational acceptability is sufficient to motivate conformity to right action. However, helping children to act as moral agents is not just a matter of helping them to make moral judgements and to know right from wrong. Having all the relevant information is no guarantee of right action. The crucial factor, according to Straughan, is motivation: “Teaching children to be moral then must be a matter of teaching them to *want* to be moral” (Straughan, 1988, p. 111). The feeling component of morality is of the utmost importance whereby they will have greater concern for the welfare of others. Straughan contends that religious education can be important here because of its emphasis on all humans as brothers and as children of God. He sees the justification of one’s beliefs as important because one is clearer about one’s commitments when one can rationally justify one’s beliefs and this kind of clarity is crucial in being a moral agent (p. 123).

Concern for the welfare of others, the feeling part of relationships, makes people aware of obligations and responsibilities and helps them to regulate actions in ways that are consistent. According to Keller & Edelstein, affective bonding in relationships plays a crucial role in the development of the moral self. In early adolescence this sharing of emotions and intimate bonding is critical for the development of a sense of self. Experience of affective bonding can become a strong motivational force in decision-making and conflict resolution between friends (Keller & Edelstein, 1993, p. 315).

3.2.2 The affective and emotive basis of ethics

Peters (1973) contends that the real tension is between the demands of reason and the particularist promptings of compassion. A more Humean account of the moral life can be given in which the virtue of justice can play a central role but where there is a place for the natural virtues “stemming from the sentiment of humanity” (Peters, 1973, p. 27). The narrow rationalism of most neo-Kantian theories, concentrating on the form of moral life in which rules are central, results in the neglect of the affective and emotive basis of ethics. In a similar vein, Benhabib (1992, p. 50) contends that these theories do not take account of the embedded, finite aspects of human beings and are blind to the

significance of emotional and character development. We are not rational by virtue of birth but acquire it through social experiences and identity formation. In the current understanding, the autonomous person is one who asserts independence but moral autonomy could also be understood as growth and change, sustained by a network of relationships. Benhabib further claims that ethical rationalism since the eighteenth century has promoted a form of moral blindness with respect to the moral experience claims of women and children. The communicative ethics of Habermas (1990), in claiming that judgements of justice constitute the hard core of moral theory, is for her, an example of ethical rationalism, privileging moral judgement to the neglect of moral emotions and character. The standpoint of the “generalised other” predominates in such universalist moral theory. The “generalised other” (Mead, 1934), the community or social group which gives the individual his or her unity of self, demands that we see every individual as a rational being entitled to the same rights and duties as ourselves. Emphasis on this demand tends to occlude the “concrete” other, the individual who has concrete needs, desires and feelings. The standpoint of the “concrete other” requires that we regard every individual with a concrete history, identity and emotional make-up. We seek to understand the other’s motivations and confirm our common humanity and individuality. Benhabib contends that the restriction of the moral domain to questions of justice and the ideas of moral autonomy, as well as leading to “epistemological blindness toward the concrete other” has also resulted in the “privatisation of women’s experience” (Benhabib, 1992, p. 164).

It is argued that women’s relationships and women’s ways of knowing are not taken account of in cognitivist moral theories such as Habermas’s theory of the ideal speech situation in which arguments are traded back and forth. Harding questions the privileged role of argument as a way of vindicating truth and moral claims. Assertiveness in speaking is overestimated while listening is undervalued. The goal is agreement rather than understanding. It marginalizes many who are subjective in their knowing and their thinking. In contrast she asserts that the knower uses empathy in communicating with others, which culminates in “constructed knowing” (Harding, 1996, p. 93). Dominant ideals of moral autonomy and its privileged definition of the moral sphere have marginalized and continue to silence women’s voices, a fact also attested to by Gilligan & Brown (1992). Gilligan (1982) calls for the expansion of the definition of the moral domain, to question the ideals of the autonomous self in light of the experiences of women and children and to concede that a universalist moral theory

must heed the voice of the excluded. Gilligan claims that because women and their experiences were excluded from mainstream developmental theories in psychology, the models and hypotheses which have emerged can not claim to be either universal or neutral. Universalist moral theory must hear the story of the excluded, the different voice. Hannah Arendt (1958) maintains that we are embedded within a web of relationships. I am part of others' stories and they are a part of mine. A coherent sense of self and identity depends on how one integrates these stories into one's life history.

3.2.3 The moral self as a construct

The moral self is the result of socialisation experiences as well as of rational thinking. This social construction of the self is based on recognition of the self as agent in interaction with significant others. In this interaction with others we learn the consequences of our actions on others, receiving their approval or disapproval. I learn to understand myself in relation to others from the positive affirmation or otherwise I receive. Others become the mirror through which I come to know myself; I grow in interaction with them. Insofar as I wish to be part of relationships, I must regulate my actions in accordance with given standards. Through perspective-taking and empathic feelings the self comes to emotionally share the world of others, to become part of that world (Keller & Edelstein 1993, p. 313). Moral feelings are tied to an image of myself that I want to maintain. Moral ideals motivate me to moral action. I have a sense of myself as a moral agent and I experience obligations and responsibilities as personally binding. Moral sense is tied up with my sense of self as a person. If I have established consistency between my judgements and my actions I will see obligations as personally binding and strong affective bonding will strengthen moral motivation. Through emotional bonding with a peer, a sense of self is established. Therefore a secure self is a connected self. Close identification with friends plays a very strong role in adolescents' evaluation of action and responsibilities, a friend's need being a spur to action. This is usually a reciprocal relationship. Keller and Edelstein (1986, 1990) consider the development of friendship bonds as the decisive experience for building up moral motivation.

Valuing the self and valuing others are connected. Past experiences affect our self-evaluation. When the basic needs of the self are not met in childhood, an individual is likely to develop a defensive self. According to Staub (1993), the way a person's

identity is constructed has direct implications for morality, affecting disposition for moral thoughts, feelings and actions. While the role of others is integral to the constitution of moral selfhood, still, embeddedness in the group can be an inhibiting factor. People have greater capacity for moral thought, feeling and action when they can psychologically separate themselves from the group and so can critically evaluate the meaning and consequences of their group's behaviour (Staub, p. 347). Self-awareness influences the choices we make. The autonomous self is capable of connection, whereas people with disconnected selves cut themselves off from others. Experiencing unity therefore requires a secure and connected self and a consciousness of common humanity with others. Our concept of selfhood is derived from the unity of a narrative which links us to those around us from birth. In a word, narrative structure is at the core of the formation of the self.

3.2.4 The narrative view of self

The unity of a human life is according to MacIntyre (1981, p. 203), the unity of a narrative quest. He contends that in diminishing the cultural place of narrative e.g. in sociohistorical, biographical, intellectual and religious tradition, we have encouraged the disconnection of the narrative from life. One's traditions and inherited roles are the "givens" of one's life. It is because we all live out narratives in our lives that we understand our own lives and the actions of others. Each of us, according to MacIntyre (1981, p. 199), "being a main character in his own drama plays subordinate parts in the drama of others, and each drama intersects with the others". Disconnected from its roles, the self loses something of the social relationships in which Aristotelian virtues function. The self becomes invisible and life consists of a series of unconnected episodes with no scope for the exercise of dispositions. The "unity of virtue in someone's life is intelligible only as a characteristic of a unitary life, a life that can be conceived and evaluated as a whole" (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 191).

A sense of self is, according to Dunne, mediated by significant others and internalised by the child. Who we are and who we become is shaped in part by our history. We make sense of our lives through the stories that shape it. The self becomes identified with its loves. Self-understanding is always an understanding of one's relatedness to others and to the good (Dunne, 1995, p. 151). One becomes identified with the story one tells and it thus influences actions and becomes self-constitutive. In the telling one

becomes accountable to others, connected to them and part of an intricate tapestry of cultural and interpersonal relations.

Noddings (1984, p. 4) maintains that the foundation of ethical caring is our memory of caring and our longing for goodness, rather than our moral reasoning capacity. This view differs from the cognitive developmentalist one as to the central importance of story and dialogue in human development, especially as they pertain to one's sense of self. Her contention is that the individual in mainstream developmental psychology is a private self, set apart from other selves, focused on his or her own development, essentially unmediated by the other. This theory does not take account of the coherence of the self, grounded in its narrative structure. I am the teller and receiver of stories through which I discover connections between myself and others. I come to know more deeply the meaning of my own cultural and historical narrative. It thus enables me to empathise with others. Our sense of self is, according to Witherall (1991, p. 85), influenced by our connection with others within our social sphere, our sharing mutual predicaments and possibilities; we are defined by the cultural context that shapes us, the collective norms of the society into which we were born. The prejudices and values of that society, evolving over time, form part of the package of our inheritance and become ingrained in our consciousness.

It is through narrative that we represent and give meaning to our life's experiences. Tappan & Brown (1991, p. 176) stress the relationship between narrative, moral development and moral education. They advocate a narrative approach to moral education whereby children and adolescents are encouraged to tell their own moral stories. This is a way of translating knowing into telling and hence placing them in the context of the ongoing narratives of their lives. In the telling of the story we endow a certain sequence of events with moral meaning:

[Moral stories] represent the complex and complicated interrelationship between the cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions of lived moral experience. As such, they again illustrate the ways in which narrative serves to give meaning to lived experiences of moral conflict and choice (Tappan & Brown, 1991, p. 179).

In telling my own moral story, I am both author and actor in my own drama. In recounting, I am telling my version of the story, which may or may not correspond to the actual facts of the case but I am claiming moral authority from my own perspective. How we articulate our stories influences how we think, feel and act. A narrative

approach to moral education affords students the opportunity to tell their own moral stories, to reflect on their own experience from their own moral perspective. This will lead to an increased sense of authority and authorization on behalf of that perspective but also an increased sense of responsibility for action. Tappan & Brown advocate this approach, not entirely on its own, but in conjunction with other compatible approaches. They contend that it plays a valuable role in helping students to authorise their own moral choices and to have their voices and moral perspective shared with others.

The importance of the shared narrative in helping to establish connection, is also stressed by Belenky (1996) and her associates who see it as especially central to women's psychological development and learning. They speak about a voice of "connected knowing", a sharing of the self and other, a "felt relation between knower and known" (Belenky, pp. 102-103). The emphasis is on the nourishment of greater inclusiveness, change and growth over time. One of the functions of narrative Bruner (1986, p. 69) contends, is to hold cognition, emotion and action together, and thereby to give meaning to human experience through the representation of such a unity. The moral agent, in the Aristotelian sense is not a solitary individual, a being for himself pursuing his own freedom, as Sartre portrays him, but a member of inter-related communities who is involved in a common life.

3.3 Virtue and moral disposition

3.3.1 Aristotle's account

An adequate account of moral development depends on a reasonably developed conception of morality. Morality as Aristotle conceives it is concerned with the human good. It is concerned with well-being and happiness, promoting the conditions in which human beings act well and live good lives. Some think we are made good by nature, others by habituation, and others by teaching (NE 10, 9: 1179b20f). Aristotle rejected Plato's quest for a universal or eternal conception of the good, divorced from the specific human situation. He contended that the good for human beings has to be worked out in relation to goods that are achievable by human activity or in terms of goals at which human beings are able to aim (Crittenden, 1990, p. 105). Reason on its own initiates no changes. The central idea in Aristotle's account of moral maturity is that the good life is lived according to a complex set of excellences or virtues, certain

dispositions for acting and feeling, exercised in choice and responsibility. Aristotle places virtue and the cultivation of moral disposition at the centre of morality. One is habituated into right action and for this to happen, other people are indispensable. It is in and through dealings with others that a person can become virtuous and for Aristotle, virtue is its own reward in the sense that it is the essential constituent of happiness.

The virtues are primarily moral virtues or virtues of character, under the guidance of certain qualities of mind, especially the intellectual virtue of practical wisdom or *phronesis*. Aristotelian *phronesis*, often translated as prudence, is according to Dunne (1993), a habit of attentiveness that enables one to profit from past experience, thus enriching our present through the insights gained. The just person does good actions for their own sake. Being virtuous requires practical knowledge, for it is knowledge that directs action. Knowledge is gained through experience and experience enhances knowledge (Dunne, 1993, pp. 276-280). There can however be an inconsistency between knowledge and conduct. According to Socrates, to know the good is to do it. Aristotle maintained that this contradicts the facts. Knowing what is right does not in itself make a person prudent. One must be disposed to do it. Moral weakness *akrasia* can occur only in someone whose grasp of the particular premise is weakened. He knows but does not follow his convictions (Dunne, 1993). The licentious person has no such conflict because he does not care and is not committed to the pursuit of the good, but to his own pleasures (NE 1145a 15-34). Ultimately it is the practice of virtuous acts that constitutes good character because the good man or woman is disposed to following through on what he or she believes to be right action and is committed to the ideal of the good.

The moral virtues extolled by Aristotle are essentially courage, self-control, generosity, a spirit of goodwill and cooperativeness, truthfulness, justice, and a capacity for love and friendship. These virtues or moral excellences are the constitutive elements of the good life. *Eudaimonia* or happiness depends on other things as well, on the sort of society one lives in and having a degree of luck in matters beyond one's control. The good life consists in living according to reason in contrast to living dominated by one's passions or appetites. It is the irrational passions that Aristotle has in mind here. The morally mature person is the one who loves and hates in the right way, who experiences pleasure and pain rightly. The virtues are concerned also with actions and passions, and achieving moral excellence is a matter of being emotionally affected in the right ways. Intelligent choice of action involves both knowledge and desire; one's emotional

response to a situation is guided by practical wisdom (NE 1113a; 1139a23; b4-5). Practical wisdom enables one to ascertain what is good for oneself and the members of one's community and what is best in particular situations (Crittenden, 1990, p. 109).

The young child's capacity for deliberation and rational choice is undeveloped and the child is incapable of achieving virtue by itself but Aristotle stresses the need for habituation as a prerequisite for instruction and understanding in morality (NE 1, 3 1095 a 2-4). The child's progress toward a position where he or she can stand back apart from personal desires and evaluate them is, according to MacIntyre (1999, p. 88), an "extended initiation into the habits which are the virtues". Moral understanding is found in what a person loves and through habituation the child comes to love what is noble and develop a deeper understanding. The crucial question for modern day educators is in sifting through conflicting theories and deciding which theory or theories of moral development offer the most promise.

3.3.2 The virtue ethics approach

Aristotle's account of ethics and of ethical formation has assumed particular importance as the background to and inspiration for the contemporary approach, already referred to in virtue ethics. The virtue approach to moral education has as its goal, the encouragement of virtues and their constituents (Carr & Steutal, 1999). While it stands in significant contrast to Kantian approaches, it has much in common with the approaches to moral education of the ethic of care (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984) and character education (Likona, 1996). The virtue approach focuses on the development of the virtues and the promotion of admirable traits of character. It accords more significance to agents and their character, rather than on the rightness or wrongness of actions or kinds of actions. It stresses the primacy of good character over right conduct and what we are obliged to do. Accordingly it sees the essential concern of moral education as habituation in the virtues, how we are to live virtuous lives and not just with mastery of cognitive processes. Virtue theories see the foundations of virtue as lying not only in rational agency but also in habit, emotion and sentiment (Blum, 1994, p. 169).

Within the virtue ethic approach values are appreciated for their own sake, and the crucial aim of moral education is to show how life can be enriched by the possession and exercise of qualities such as honesty, temperance, courage, justice and charity (Carr

& Steutal, p. 245). Basic moral training especially in the early years is stressed, but critical appreciation of moral reasons is also encouraged. One must be able to provide good reasons for choosing one course of action over another. Motivational factors must enter into any real appreciation of principles. On this view there is an internal relation between moral reason and moral motivation. No one could claim to have fully grasped a moral reason or to have acquired the relevant moral virtue who is not inclined to pursue what that reason enjoins. The cultivation of affect is crucial to the development of moral dispositions. Aristotelian virtue requires the refinement of certain human capacities in the interests of self and others. For example, consciousness of the dignity of the self and an awareness of how one's actions impinge on others would call for the virtue of temperance (NE 1104a11-32).

The emphasis on the internal relation between reason and emotion is connected with other features of the virtue approach to ethics. The modelling of conduct, through the example of others or moral exemplars, is a key factor for virtue ethics. In the development of moral sensibilities, virtue adherents agree on the importance of narrative and the potential of literary heritage and story; virtue ethicists stress the importance of narrative in general for the formation of personal and cultural moral identity.

A characteristic of an ethics of virtue is that aretaic concepts and judgements are treated as basic or primary. When we judge actions in aretaic terms we always do so because of the motives, dispositions or traits of character the agent manifests. An ethics of virtue, according to Slote (1992, pp. 89-93), puts a greater emphasis on the ethical assessment of agents and traits than it puts on the evaluation of actions. Virtue ethicists do not lay claim to founding an original theory. Rather their claim is that their theory reflects a basically correct view of the nature of the moral life.

There is however some criticism of the virtue ethics approach to moral education even from those who espouse it (Steutal, 1997, p. 396). In order to reach a clearer understanding of the harmonisation of reason, affect and behaviour in virtuous conduct, Steutal maintains that further research and more conceptual work on the psychology of virtue is necessary. The relationship between moral habituation and the development of autonomous moral judgement needs to be made clear. Theories of moral education ought to translate into appropriate moral educational strategies if the furtherance of virtuous conduct is to be the ultimate aim. For me as a classroom teacher, a moral education class or discussion according to the Blatt-Kohlberg (1975) or Lind (2001)

approach has definite guidelines and I know what to expect at different age levels. It is not so with a virtue ethics approach. I am not aware of any research that has been done to guide classroom practice outside of some broad outline of the philosophy itself. What is good conduct like and how can we make ourselves better? These are the questions that are ultimately important to moral educators and moral philosophers.

3.3.3 Love of the Good

The revival of Aristotelian insights through virtue ethics has been one significant counter thrust to the way in which the idea of goodness and of virtue has been largely superseded in western moral philosophy by the idea of rightness. Another notable rejoinder to this supercession is to be found in the work of Iris Murdoch. Murdoch points to a void in recent British moral philosophy. In her view there is a need for “a moral philosophy in which the concept of love, so rarely mentioned now by philosophers, can once again be made central” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 238). What is the good person like? Can we make ourselves morally better? These are questions Murdoch thinks the philosopher should try to answer. She suggests that what is needed is a reorientation which will provide an energy of a different kind from a different source. Love is what ultimately inspires people. We should be aiming at goodness more than freedom or right action. Right action should provide the starting point of reflection and not its conclusion; the aim of morality cannot be simply action (p. 357). One needs some conception of the human soul, and of a transcendent reality to which it is in some form related. The task of morals must be the purification and reorientation of the soul. Good is non-representable and indefinable. Ordinary human love is striking evidence of a transcendence of good. For Murdoch, to see the reality of another person is a work of love, justice and pity. Love necessitates the suppression of the self as “the fat relentless ego” and giving attention to what is pure and good (Murdoch, 1998, p. 342).

In developing this line of thought, Murdoch quite explicitly involves Plato and is also much influenced by a recent Platonist, the French philosopher, Simone Weil. Plato stressed the connections between goodness, truth and love. For him, the True and the Good are aspects of the one object of the same person. Weil (1951, p. 126) speaks of purity of thought and action, putting others’ needs before one’s own, seeing it as “the central good for every man is the free disposal of himself” in the service of others. If we could really see someone in their full humanity, we could not treat them unjustly. Weil

urges valuing truth for its own sake, a commitment to truth and a love of truth or rather the spirit of truth in love. This view is echoed by Gaita (2000) who refers to love of truth as a spiritual love, the discursive capacities of the mind in service to a love of truth. The sense of life as a gift and the love of the beauty of the world is, according to Gaita, nourishment of the soul. He maintains that part of our intellectual and cultural tradition should include spiritual possibilities, the capacity to awaken in people a sense of goodness: "The deepest values of the life of the mind can not be taught. They can only be shown....only to those who have eyes to see" (Gaita, p. 230). Like Weil, Gaita sees Truth as a need of the soul.

Similar sentiments are expressed by Peters who contends that love of truth can transform all activities, and like religion it can enlarge the context in which these activities are placed, "enabling one to understand the facts of a more mundane level of experience in a new light, as one is moved by awe at certain aspects of the world" (Peters, 1973, p. 113).

3.3.4 Concern for the other

Love of the Good is translated into moral living mainly in the form of concern for others. I have touched on concern for others in a previous section (3.2.4) but here I will deal with the problem of individualism getting in the way of concern for others. Modern search for authenticity can result in narcissistic self-fulfilment; western emphasis on individualism has resulted in a loss of concern for others and a sense of responsibility for one's neighbour. True self-fulfilment requires moral demands beyond the self in some form. It is by transcending the self that we become self-actualised. For Taylor (1991) real authenticity has to include the discovery of our own original way of being and must be inwardly directed. One cannot do this in isolation but through dialogue in relationship with others. This view is echoed in Levinas' (In Vetlesen, 1997, p. 157) call for unselfish concern for the other. For Levinas, morality begins and ends in the human dyad, the *I-Thou* relationship, in the unselfish concern for the other without thought of reciprocity. Its essence is in being open to the other, allowing the other to unfold. For Levinas, the other appears as Face, as a revelation. To welcome the other is to surrender the "I", to put in question my freedom. Instead of stealing my freedom from me, the other gives it meaning in presenting it with a task. It is the other, *qua* destitute, weak and frail that commands me. I am thrown into the domain of the moral, committed to

bearing responsibility for the fate of the other without being concerned with his concern for me. Morality, rather than being an option, is a predicament (Vetlesen, 1997, p. 153). This is so because our lives are intertwined and in this interdependence, we have responsibility for each other.

This sort of Levinasian view is also developed by Martin Buber. In Levinas's work there is a strong Jewish strain of thought – the sense of solidarity with others and a sense of responsibility for the down-trodden – and in Buber this also comes across. Buber (1961) maintains that the basic movement of the life of dialogue is a turning towards the other, a soul connection. To recognise the other in his particular existence is to plunge into “silent unity”; it is a dialogue between *I* and *Thou*. The person who is no longer concerned nor assumes responsibility for the other with his whole being, becomes sterile in soul and “a sterile soul ceases to be a soul”. Buber's thesis rests on a belief in God. Man adrift, alone in an alien universe, needs to hear the “wing-beat of the spirit above the abyss”, and the role of the educator in helping to bring him back to his own unity, will help to put him back again face to face with God (Buber, 1961, p. 47).

Morality is inseparable from the ways in which people are valued and experience one another. People become who they are through the ways in which they participate in society. Acting morally presupposes an understanding of the self and of the other, but understanding is not enough. There has to be moral sentiment, a concern for the needs of the other as well as a strong inner conviction to meet those needs. Concern for the other requires not only the sublimation of the self but a transformation in the ways in which mutual interdependence and participation in society is understood. The way forward, according to Williamson, is in nurturing the primal moral sense of people combined with the development of communication so that people are enabled to make choices and feel valued. That is the only way of “avoiding all the pitfalls of moral relativism” (Williamson, 1997, p. 99).

These views are echoed by Bauman (1993), a prominent analyst of post-modern life-style and much indebted to Levinas. Post-modern life strategies tend to render human relations fragmentary and discontinuous and create a distance between the individual and the other, leading to lack of engagement with the other or sense of commitment to his or her welfare. Morality has to find new grounding. Human beings, he contends, are neither fundamentally good nor bad; they are ambivalent but capable of acting morally towards one another. We are ineluctably moral beings. I am challenged with responsibility for the other and responsibility for the other is shot through with

ambivalence. Moral life is a life of continuous uncertainty. To act morally is to face up to that incurable ambivalence. This being-for the other, the tearing off of masks until “the naked defenceless face shows itself” is described as a work of love. Bauman further reminds us that taking responsibility for the other means not considering the other as a specimen, or species or category but as a unique dignified human being (Bauman, 1993, p. 60).

The kind of moral virtues and their developmental precursors such as sympathy, compassion, kindness, and generosity which were important in consideration for the other, were given little consideration in moral developmental theories. Blum (1994, p. 175) stresses the need for compassion or responsiveness to another’s condition. Compassion, according to Blum, is not a simple feeling state but a complex emotional attitude towards another involving active regard for his good and a view of him as a fellow human being with emotional responses akin to one’s own. Responsiveness could be called an altruistic virtue, involving concern for the good of the other and a disposition to perform beneficent actions. Responsiveness is towards the other’s condition, rather than towards some particular emotion or feeling. It involves some kind initiative and not merely a passive response and thus involves both cognitive and affective dimensions (Blum, 1994, p. 188).

3.3.5 Moral exemplars

Another facet of morality, often neglected in cognitive developmental theories, has received attention in some recent works – how to understand conspicuously good persons of outstanding virtue who can act as moral exemplars. The relevance of this to moral education is obvious. Positive identification with an inspiring model contributes to building moral values into students’ identities, their conceptions of who they are and who they want to be. In a study of morally exceptional adults Colby & Damon (1992) found that the integration of self and morality was central in the commitment of moral exemplars to the common good. They contend that moral behaviour depends on something beyond moral beliefs, *per se*. It depends on how and to what extent the individuals’ moral concerns are important to their sense of themselves as people. Similar findings were reported by Hart & Fegley (1995) who found associations between personal definition and prosocial conduct. They studied the moral identities of

a group of inner city adolescents who exhibited a high degree of care for others and community service voluntarism.

Other research on moral exemplars by Blum confirms that moral exemplars hold worthy ideals and attempt consciously to live up to them. Emulating exemplars, those displaying moral excellence and moral heroism, can be a force for one's moral growth and can affect one's values and mode of life in suggesting particular directions one might take in one's own moral improvement (Blum, 1994, p. 96). Our discussion of moral exemplars is concerned with love of the Good and Murdoch's discussion of the Good is also relevant to our present discussion of moral exemplars.

Murdoch (1972) characterises moral excellence in terms of seeing the right relationship and the priority between different human values. Although we cannot all be moral exemplars, she contends that we can all be better than we are. There are some virtues that we could come to possess in greater degree than we do now. A genuine sense of morality enables us to see virtue as the only thing of worth. Murdoch suggests that moral goodness is properly regarded as the central value in human life and when the soul is turned toward good the highest part of the soul is enlivened. Questions such as "What is the good man like? Can we make ourselves morally better?" should be the central preoccupations of moral philosophy (Murdoch, 1972, p. 52). Life is not the whole story. Commenting on this aspect of Murdoch's work, Taylor speaks of entering the forest, the point beyond, something which matters beyond life, being called on to a change of identity. "One enters the forest through the full-hearted love of some good beyond life" (Taylor, 1996, p. 26).

As already noted (in 3.3.3 above) the notion of the articulation of the good has been relatively neglected in Anglo-Saxon moral philosophy. Theories of justice-benevolence take precedence over virtues of fulfilment and the good life. Taylor suggests that we help to clarify what it is good to *be* by getting clearer on just what is noble or admirable about human potential. Some of our articulations not only help us to define better what we want to be and do. They also *move* us. We are moved by human powers. Articulating a constitutive good can inspire and move us to want to be and do it. Exemplary people and actions, whether in real life or in story, have the power to inspire us to live more meaningful and purposeful lives. There are of course different kinds of moral excellences. According to Blum, one need not necessarily be an idealist but in responding to a situation one can discover depths of character which can impel one towards exceptional behaviour. An example was Oscar Schindler who responded to a

particular situation of the war and showed outstanding courage in sheltering substantial numbers of Jewish workers by employing them in his munitions factory, thereby saving them from certain death in Auschwitz. Schindler's wife declared after his death that Oscar "was fortunate that in the short fierce era between 1939 and 1945 he had met people who summoned forth his deepest talent" (Keneally in Blum, 1994, p. 94). Perhaps that is what we need, something to reach towards and inspire us, some purpose that engages us deeply.

3.3.6 Contemporary culture: inhospitable ground for a rich morality?

In the preceding section I have been attempting to bring out those aspects of the moral life that receive scant attention when the primacy if not exclusive focus is on obligation-centred morality. In Taylor's nice image what I have been trying to do is to draw attention to the ethical persons dwelling in the field and forest and not only in "the corral" (Taylor, 1996, p. 5). However, while Taylor may be right there is much in contemporary culture which conspires against these wider and richer aspects of morality receiving their proper due. Morality, as restricted to the domain of justice, the "corral", what it is right to do, has been for long the subject of contention. Other questions beyond the moral beg attention: How am I going to live my life? What kind of life is worth living? What constitutes a rich and meaningful life? (Taylor, 1989). Visions of the good life get blurred in a culture which prizes autonomy over connection to others. Modern culture, on the one hand has diversified our moral sources, giving exceptional value to equality, rights and freedom and commitment to universal justice and well-being. On the other, according to Taylor, the atomistic focus on individual goals, dominant in our culture, dissolves communities and divides us from each other. The changes in modern life, decline in the practice of religion, secularisation, industrialisation, technology, mobility have resulted in a cultural mutation in which our sense of identity has become blurred and our horizons fractured. Taylor sees instrumental society with its utilitarian values as threatening to empty life of its richness, depth and meaning; the individual, disconnected from community, enters a series of mobile, changing, revocable situations, relating to others through partial roles (Taylor, 1989, p. 502).

Taylor's *Sources of the Self* was undertaken as a work of retrieval, to uncover buried goods, to emphasise the need for the recognition of some intrinsically valuable purpose

in life beyond the utilitarian, to point away from the kind of emptiness and shallowness that distinguishes the fragmented individual and point him towards the fulfilment of his expressive potential, to authenticity. This view is echoed by many. Galston points to a shallowness in modern liberal societies and contends that the greatest threat to children is “not that they will believe something too deeply but that they will believe nothing very deeply at all” (Galston, 1989, p. 101).

An obligation-centred morality emphasises right at the expense of the good and has resulted in a narrowness in moral philosophy. Our identity is what allows us to define what is important to us and what is not. A society of self-fulfillers, whose allegiances are revocable, cannot identify strongly enough with the community. Taylor’s exploration of modern identity seeks the identification of citizens with their public institutions and political way of life. Morality, like every other aspect of our lives has to be formed co-operatively. Co-operation does not displace each individual’s own struggle. It supplements it. Midgley (1997, p. 31) contends that our obsession with protecting individual freedom has tended to isolate each person in an “unbreathable moral vacuum in a way that paralyses action”. Western culture extols individualism making personal freedom a central ideal and this has resulted in a neglect of the social aspect of morality and consequently an increase in irresponsibility and crime. There is room for some kind of teaching to help people respect the feelings of others, argues Midgley, because people no longer know what they ought to do. Moral attitudes need to be caught or absorbed in the community. This raises the question as to what kind of education and what kind of community can best nurture the virtues of cooperation and responsibility.

3.4 What kind of moral education?

3.4.1 A liberal or non-liberal account?

An adequate theory of moral education has to take account of how best to assist people in pursuing a life that has meaning and purpose, which in Aristotelian terms means a fulfilling life lived according to the practice of the virtues. The cultivation of certain dispositions that assist in character development and good relationships with others could be considered as one of the basic aims of moral education. Discipline and training, even if worthwhile goals in themselves, are nonetheless insufficient for

morality. Liberal educationalists, for whom notions of justice, fairness and individual rights play a central role, see the development of personal autonomy as the principal aim of moral education, which in essence means giving people the rational resources to decide for themselves how they should live their lives (Kohlberg, 1981, 1984).

The liberal vision of moral education has been the object of considerable criticism however. Sandel (1982, p. 79), for example, claims that it is flawed and its aspiration incomplete and contends that neutrality is impossible in that we can never escape the effects of our conditioning. We have allegiances that go beyond obligations and enduring attachments and commitments which, taken together, partly define the person I am. The liberal conception of morality, indebted to Kant for much of its philosophical foundation, with its emphasis on individual rights and freedoms, has according to Carr (1999), nothing to say about the quality of one's value preferences. For Carr moral deliberation, as construed by liberal theory, is simply the social dimension of enlightened self-interest. Young people need something more than the pursuit of individualistic personal fulfilment. Aristotelian values were not seen as subjective preferences but as principled dispositions rooted in established practices, conducive to human flourishing. The crucial issue for moral education, according to Carr, is whether young people are educationally better served by a liberal or non-liberal conception of moral education. He argues for a restatement or a revival of an ethics of aspiration, something akin to the Christian ideal, which would seem to offer a more promising foundation for a programme of moral education, leading to the proper appreciation and acquisition by pupils of truly fulfilling moral values (Carr, 1999, p. 40).

In MacIntyre's account the proper context for cultivation of the virtues is the community from whence the narrative of our lives begins. He contends that since we have encouraged the disconnection of narrative from life we no longer know who we are and this lack of self-knowledge is part of our predicament: "The self has to find its identity in and through its membership in communities, such as those of the family, neighbourhood, the city and the tribe" (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 205). MacIntyre attempts to explain the whole of morality in terms of virtues grounded in the practices and way of life of particular communities. It is within the construction of local forms of community that civility and intellectual and moral life can be sustained. In narrative unity I find my concept of selfhood. The Aristotelian moral agent is nothing without others but finds his identity as a member of inter-related communities. Involvement in the common life of the family, the household and the state characterised citizenship. The search for the

Good, for the Universal, consists in living the kind of life that is the exercise of the virtues. MacIntyre sees the virtues as sustaining relationships to the past, to the future as well as to the present; virtue and self-knowledge are for the independent practical reasoner the essential constituents of full human flourishing (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 105).

Virtue ethics, as variously espoused by theorists such as Carr or MacIntyre, is by and large committed to some form of communitarianism. A similar case is made by Blum (1994, p. 169) who argues that the ties between community and virtue may be more significant than moral theory has taken into account. He contends that communities can shape our sense of what we feel morally drawn to do. Virtue is not simply generated by pure unconnected autonomous individuals but in communities of sorts. The communitarian criticism is that the autonomous individual would come to regard received cultural ties and responsibilities as a matter of choice. He or she could feel free to accept or reject them. Sandel (1996, p. 12) suggests that the unencumbered self will not feel obligated to fulfil ends that he has not chosen, ends defined by identities as members of families, cultures or traditions.

For all the obvious merits of the communitarian position some serious questions about its relevance to the contemporary world need to be faced. Such questions have been raised by Wringer (among others) who points out that we should not be too eager to conclude that material change in itself constitutes moral decline. We no longer live in self-sufficient, self-contained communities, small enough for most of those affecting our lives and affected by our actions to be known. Wringer maintains that it is material change, population growth resulting in greater mobility, advances in technology that have resulted in changed work practices, and urbanisation with its increased opportunities for mobility and communication that have brought about a diminution of community life and practice rather than simply moral decline (Wringer, 1998, p. 232).

Wringer argues that if the notion of developing the virtues is to have a place in moral education it must be in ways that are both credible and appropriate to our age rather than hankering after those of other ages and other traditions. The virtues must be acquired in a whole learning experience involving school, work, youth clubs and churches. He suggests that individual counselling would help young people to identify their particular inclinations as well as having discussion and moral reasoning form part of such a programme. Concentrating on a morality that seeks to curb one's desires and to insist on doing what pleases others rather than oneself can, according to Wringer, pose problems of motivation for young people. He argues that the young should be encouraged to use

their own freedom actively and positively because it is in asserting oneself and finding one's own path that one becomes empowered in the modern world. A moral education, which emphasises the rights of young people themselves alongside those of others, would be more reputable and more effective than one based on the opposition between virtue and self-interest or pleasure (Wringe, 1999, p. 287). Perhaps the real challenge here is to show how the emphasis on individual freedom in Wringe's account can be reconciled with the emphasis on more communal and objective standards in the authors cited earlier. This is a challenge to which I will return in Part II when I will be considering individual empowerment of the young through community in the practice of Thinking Time – Philosophy with Children.

For too long attention has been focused on the school as the cradle for education and inculcation into moral life. Without the support of the wider community the school cannot function effectively. We need to look at everyday practices. The affective environment is crucial for moral development. Habitual moral responses and their integration with moral reflection depend upon socialisation within the family, the community, the peer group and the schools. Damon & Colby attribute the increase in youth violence in part to the fragmentation and polarisation of moral values that characterise our current situation and point to the need for a coherent moral voice that cuts through the moral pluralism of our diverse society. This would imply a certain consensus on core values in the community. While complete consensus is unlikely, they reckon that there may still be some core values that we can all share. The school can only be part of the solution. All the institutions in the child's life must play a constructive role in his or her moral growth (Damon & Colby, 1996, p. 36).

3.4.2 A renewal of civil society

Individualist legacies of Enlightenment thinking have led to the decline of community as a way of life. Individual freedom was perceived as breaking the binds of community and being set free from the circumstances of one's birth. We seem to have come full circle now and the idea of community is being re-evaluated. What had once been perceived as a constraint is now a source of empowerment. The disconnection from community, Bauman claims, has resulted in a fragmented and discontinuous life that promotes the waning of moral impulses. Bauman contends that the promotion of a new and badly needed ethics for the new age can only be approached as a political issue and

task. Citizens need to be helped to recover the voices they have lost and make them again audible, to help share responsibility by actively partaking in political life. Post-modern pressures need to be counteracted by more autonomy for individual moral selves and more vigorous sharing of collective responsibilities. In short the autonomous citizen needs to be part of a fully-fledged, self-reflective and self-correcting political community (Bauman, 1993, p. 287).

Many theorists claim that the breakdown in community values and ensuing alienation from one's roots has resulted in anomie for a great number of citizens. The evidence is apathy towards democratic participation and a decline in the understanding and practice of citizenship. Williamson (1997) contends that moral understanding can only be developed and achieved through an enriched notion of citizenship which embraces all the domains of family, education, work and community, in which people interact with one another. The moral self is nurtured in social contexts and develops through living within a society. Where bureaucratic organisation and the values of the market place predominate, power is transferred to another impersonal agency, and many citizens feel alienated and powerless. In such circumstances moral sentiment can atrophy into indifference or apathy (Williamson, 1997, p. 103). This view is also echoed by Bauman (1993) who speaks of a shifting of moral responsibilities away from the self towards faceless agencies, resulting in diminished sense of personal responsibility.

The way forward according to Dunne (2002) is in a renewal of civil society where people come together in trust and civic friendship and exercise initiative in the pursuit of common interests and goals. The prevailing kinds of knowledge that promote a skilled work force take precedence in our schools over knowledge that helps in the full flourishing of the person. This kind of instrumental attitude in education – the promotion of economic prosperity – is unlikely to produce a fully-fledged self-actualised, committed citizen. It merely results in the subversion of the proper goods of education. In the classical notion of citizenship, according to Dunne, civic virtue meant caring about each other's good. Certain dispositions of mind and character were required, moderating one's desires and dealing justly with others. The political system in itself encouraged civic virtue. Prevailing notions of rights in our so-called democracies pitch the individual against the state. Our current notions of freedom and equality must include solidarity if we are to recover our sense of identity (Dunne, 2002, p. 73).

A renewal of civil society means working together towards common goals in a variety of networks in the society, finding empowerment through co-operation and concerted action. In doing so, we learn the virtues of acknowledged dependency (MacIntyre, 1989). MacIntyre contends that only where the main agencies are working together to nurture a coherent set of moral and/or religious values can the aims of moral education be realised. Is it realistic to aim for such coherence in a liberal democracy? And would it mean some curtailment of autonomy?

Callan argues that an education that seeks to curtail the development of autonomy so as to protect the growth of simple integrity, runs the risk of being self-defeating. It could come at a cost of close-mindedness, which would not be conducive to real integrity (Callan, 1997, pp. 66-67). Openness to diversity by its very nature will entail some losses as well as gains. Liberal politics, according to Callan, is often depicted as devoid of any distinctive ethical ideal and the idea that virtue and liberalism are incompatible is a view common in much of communitarian political theory. Callan defends a conception of political virtue grounded in the ideal of free and equal citizenship. His outline of liberal patriotism as part of a conception of virtue, connects an understanding of justice with the values of trust, community and generosity. The value of autonomy or reasoned self-rule is, according to Callan, the key to understanding what rightly holds together liberal and democratic principles. Political education in a liberal democracy will encourage civic participation and discourage alienation, respecting the many different ways of life that people choose under free institutions and embracing positively in its civic education the challenge of diversity. He stresses the need for a morally selective deference to diversity in his advocacy of accommodation of reasonable pluralism. An interpretation of reasonable pluralism will address the problem of inclusion, including all sources of diversity that deserve respect. This raises the problem of appropriate exclusion because in any just society one will also have unreasonable pluralism. A combination of exclusion plus political toleration, that is toleration of viewpoints in deep conflict with our own, is likely to feature in the way we deal with unreasonable pluralism (Callan, 1997, p. 23).

Rawls's (1973) political liberalism supports reasonable accommodation among contending views, nurturing the distinctive virtues of liberal coexistence. He argues that principles of justice be constructed in a way that takes into account the variety of beliefs and practices embraced by reasonable citizens. The crucial question then is: How are we to respond to the problems of political education under pluralism? Callan contends that

teaching children and future citizens to use critical reasoning and having them civically engaged while remaining genuinely critical is essential (Callan, 1997, p. 115). In a democratic society, children will be faced with a bewildering variety of conclusions and choices, and being able to deal with that variety is central to civic virtue. The tension, as Callan sees it, is between having to honour diversity and having to tolerate ways of life that conflict with one's own.

3.5 Conclusion

The moral development of the child is a complex issue engaging conflicting and overlapping theories. Many have argued that cognitive developmental theorists are preoccupied with cognitive processes to the neglect of the virtues other than justice. There are perhaps some grounds for defending Kohlberg here on the basis of his concern with moral behaviour and the high priority accorded to honesty, responsibility and civic friendship in the Just Community schools (Power *et al* 1989a). Kohlberg, however, would not lay claim to a virtue approach and in theorists who took up and responded to his work there is a shift in emphasis from cognitive processes to concern with emotive and affective motivation of the moral agent in the latter part of the twentieth century. The individual concerned with his own welfare but whose development reflected the influence of others became the connected individual whose sense of self and moral identity is carved out of a common narrative.

A retrieval of communitarian values, the whole community involved in a common goal in pursuit of moral excellences is, according to MacIntyre (1981), the answer to the present anomie, fragmentation and loss of a sense of connection to our true selves and to each other. Virtue is a matter of right affective nurture and good example in one's particular cultural environment. We must recover our sense of political connection in a renewal of civil society if we are to find our voice in collective responsibility. One must be ready to respond with one's whole life and find the unity of one's being in its willingness to accept responsibility (Buber, 1961, p. 143). In contrast to MacIntyre, advocates of a concept of rights in the education of the young place great emphasis on individual freedom that respects the rights and welfare of others as well as one's own and on an entitlement to start life as equals (Wringe, 1999, pp. 292-293).

Virtue theorists see the revival of virtue ethics as offering the best hope of a coherent moral theory. It is, they claim (Carr & Steutal, 1999), closer to the Aristotelian notion of

the integration of moral habit and moral reflection, the harmonisation of reason, affect and behaviour in virtuous conduct. Aristotle's account of moral education embraced intellectual and moral virtues, neither being complete without the other. What is lacking in most children without moral training, according to Aristotle, is an attachment to what is admirable, *kalon* (NE 1179b4-26). They will not develop this through argument alone but proper nurture will allow them to develop a taste for what is good and admirable and a devotion to it for its own sake.

What is moral excellence and what goals are worth pursuing? Taylor (1996) and Murdoch (1972) point towards a love of the Good, what it is good to *be* and not just to *do*. Moral philosophy and education need to concern themselves with the whole of our mode of living and the quality of our relations with the world not just the narrow corral of obligation. Recovery of the lost self is increasingly recognised in the pursuit of something beyond mere secular morality, in the attunement of the spirit to beauty beyond life. "Good is an attempt to look away from self towards a distant transcendent perfection, to a source of uncontaminated energy, a source of new and quite undreamt of virtue" (Murdoch, 1972, p. 99).

4 ETHICAL ENQUIRY IN THE CLASSROOM

4.1 Introduction

In this final chapter of Part I I will be concerned with complementing the previous two chapters and looking at issues related to morality that will have an important bearing on the later analysis in Part II. This chapter will go beyond discussion on moral development and understanding of morality and will provide the theoretical background to the classroom setting. My chief concern will be pedagogical issues and classroom practice and the role of the classroom community of ethical enquiry in fostering moral awareness. The question of whether children can be reasonable and engage in philosophical enquiry will be considered. I will be looking at the crucial role of dialogue as an inter-subjective process of reaching understanding, mutual respect and cooperation, and the merits of children thinking together rather than alone. Research has shown that the affective environment is crucial for moral development in so far as it determines the quality of relationships people will have. Bearing this in mind, I will be taking into account the role that social experience plays in how children form their views and the kind of judgements they make. This will entail looking at peer influence and the social influences of the wider environment.

The role of story in stimulating the moral imagination, educating us into the virtues and fostering empathy, will be considered. The teacher's role in engaging children in critical discussion, using a story as trigger, leading them towards enquiry and towards autonomous thought and action in a community of ethical enquiry, while at the same time sharing authority with participants, will be examined. Finally, in analysing the data I will be looking at gender, an issue that has been theorised; one's social experience is also the context for gender and moral orientation. I will be examining various theories on the role of gender in moral development and orientation from middle and late childhood to early adolescence.

4.2 Development of reasonableness

4.2.1 Ability to engage in philosophical enquiry

Can children develop reasonableness and engage in philosophical enquiry? The debate centres on how one defines philosophy; confusion exists about what is meant by philosophy, whether it is doing philosophy as a subject or philosophising that consists in asking naïve but sometimes deep questions about meaning and values in life. How do we get children to think more deeply? Can children be reasonable? Can they engage in philosophical enquiry? These questions have engaged some psychologists and philosophers. For Kohlberg (1981) the best moral education lies in the development of moral reasoning through moral dilemma discussion but philosophical thinking in pre-adolescents does not figure in most cognitive-developmental theories including those of Piaget and Kohlberg. They deemed early adolescence to be the optimum time for readiness for such activity when there would be sufficient intellectual development and the child was capable of formal operational thinking, which entails being capable of hypothetical reasoning, weighing possibilities and selecting from a number of alternatives. Since the application of moral principles to situations and experiences is a necessary element in becoming a moral agent, Piaget (1932) and Kohlberg (1981) would not envisage ethical enquiry with children before roughly age ten as they would not have an adequate comprehension of moral principles. Piaget showed little understanding of and gave scant attention to the philosophical abilities of younger children, dismissing their wonderment as mere musings. Habermas's (1990) theory of communicative action or discourse ethics viewed argumentation as playing a central role in the development of reasonableness, and like Kohlberg he would seem not to consider children before early adolescence for such engagement.

Despite the authority of these theorists from the cognitivist (and broadly Kantian) tradition there have been counter arguments from influential writers who claim they underestimate the moral reasoning capacities of young pre-adolescent children. Lipman (1988, 1991) and Matthews (1984, 1994) see no reason why children should not begin to engage in philosophical enquiry at a very early age; reasonableness is something to be cultivated and encouraged, and they consider that the best way is through Socratic open-ended discussion. Matthews (1984) contends that even though the thinking of

young children differs from that of adults they ask similar questions as academic philosophers at the beginning of their quest for knowledge.

In answering the question as to whether children can do philosophy we need to look at the aspects of children's experience that we privilege. Do we limit it to the age of the child or Piagetian definitions of cognitive development which privilege logico-mathematical development to the neglect of the imaginative development of the child's mind? Do we assume their thinking is primitive and in need of being developed toward the adult norm? Moral development, according to Matthews (1994, p. 65), takes place across different dimensions but the dominant moral philosophers of our time have tended to concentrate on only one, justice reasoning in the adjudication of moral conflicts. Matthews refuses to accept adult philosophy as a criterion for judging the philosophical dimension of children's thinking. Children are natural not cultivated philosophers and he suggests that adults would be better philosophers if they had the natural wonder of the child.

For Piaget and Kohlberg what counts as moral for young children (the pre-moral stages) is determined by others. Pritchard wonders whether these are best characterised as stages or as different ways of reasoning available to us, depending on the context of judgement. He suggests retaining the stage notion but revising the expected ages of children occupying them, thus acknowledging that sometimes very young children employ stage three or four reasoning rather than only stage one or two (Pritchard, 1996, p. 128). In Kohlberg's theory one stage of development displaces the next one. Matthews disputes this, claiming that children develop a working understanding of basic moral concepts at a very early age and what follows is an enlargement and refinement of these concepts rather than their displacement. Children and adults live in a world of shared moral understanding and the moral experiences of children and adults overlap to a large extent (Matthews, 1994, pp. 65-66). Kohlberg's stages would seem not to capture the nuances of children's reflections. An exclusive focus on moral dilemmas is likely to leave out much of the depth and richness in the moral thinking of children.

Morris (2000), a philosopher who has done much work in the field of Philosophy with Children, contends that many philosophers' work is concerned with the search for the absolute universal meaning of a particular concept, independent of its use in particular circumstances (e.g. the Platonic Forms). Many philosophers (Kitchener, 1990, pp. 427-428) still see this as an ideal and it is used as an argument against children

doing philosophy, suggesting that children can only do “concrete philosophy” and not “abstract philosophy”. Fox advocates teaching thinking skills, unbounded by worries on the teacher’s part as to whether they were truly philosophical or not. He argues against pursuing systematic theoretical thinking with younger children but is in favour of general discussions with children about ideas or doing preparatory work on philosophical thinking. Instead of calling it philosophy, he suggests that it is more correct to describe it as moving towards being able to do philosophy. Defining philosophy in a more liberal manner as “any and all sorts of wondering about the world” should be distinguished from the kind of systematic theoretical thinking in which academic philosophers typically engage” (Fox, 2001, p. 49).

Educational researchers have not accorded the imaginative side of the child’s mind due importance in cognitive development. According to Egan (1988, p. 29) children are capable of abstract thinking. He maintains that pre-literate children’s thinking is not deficient compared with that of adults and older children as Piaget implies. He calls the period of childhood up to eight years of age the phase of mythical thinking. Mythic understanding dominates young children’s thinking and remains a constituent of mature understanding. It is not the opposite of rational thinking but is a foundation for rational thought. In fantasy and imagination the child engages emotionally with abstractions which lie beneath the fantastic content. Otherwise they could not engage with such abstract concepts as good and evil, just and unjust, brave and cowardly. We can assume, according to Egan (1988, p. 29) “that they come to school knowing about power and weakness...oppression, resentment, and revolt, courage and fear”. Such binary themes, he contends, are at the core of stories which enthrall children and are for many people an essential part of their childhood:

Such concepts enable them to understand the basic story of Robin Hood and the Sheriff of Nottingham, for instance. Children seem to have direct access to the meaning of such stories through those fundamental abstract concepts learned from their daily experience (Egan, 1988, p. 29).

Although Egan’s ideas fit broadly with what I’m dealing with here, he himself (1997) reserves the term *philosophical* for his fourth level of understanding, belonging roughly to the post fifteen-year-old period and reached by some not all children.

Neither Plato nor Aristotle would have children engage in moral philosophical enquiry, seeing it as the preserve of mature adults. Plato considered only educated adults capable of engaging in rational argument. Children would not be able to deal with

argument and would only demean it by tearing and pulling it apart like puppies (*Republic*, 539b and c). They were considered less rational, capable only of perceiving things through the senses, confined to the Cave, the world of appearances. Only the adult philosopher can love the truth and want to know how the world is rather than how it appears to be. In Plato's account children cannot "love the truth" and therefore can have only "mere beliefs" about the world (Murriss, 2000, p. 273). According to Aristotle, children are not ready for moral philosophy because they are governed more by passions than by reason. Lacking the appropriate experience and wisdom to engage in ethical reflection, young children seem to respond more to fear of punishment than to appeal to reason (NE 1095a2-a13). A recent author Flay, who relies on Aristotle to make his case, maintains that there is a time when the individual experiences a need to make sense of things and to deal with the world. Like Aristotle, he believes that there is an appropriate time for engaging the young in philosophical enquiry. He claims that involving children in ethical argument is damaging for them and argues for the protection of the child's innocence, only giving him the tools when he is ready: "To introduce ethics before that world inevitably shatters is to do violence to the development of the child" (Flay, 1994, p. 153). The child's world, constituted by the authority of adults is for the child a secure unproblematic world. The young, according to Flay, have to find identity through their own search and arming them with ethics before they are ready risks fragmenting and alienating them. One has to wait for the *kairos* or appropriate time when the young person experiences a "felt need" and is ready to make sense of the world (p. 155).

Philosophers differ on what constitutes readiness. Children, encouraged to engage in philosophical enquiry, can reflect on their own thinking and engage in meta-dialogue (Russell, 2002). It seems that training in philosophical inquiry rather than age is the deciding factor. Flay's argument, echoing that of Aristotle, is that children lack the necessary experience to engage in ethical enquiry. He seems not to allow for the cultural shaping of readiness. I contend that children are capable of considerable reflection and this capacity of enquiring together about issues which puzzle them could considerably enrich and give meaning to their experiences. Lipman (1988, p. 15) argues that children are able at every stage in their growth to engage in philosophical enquiry and the earlier they are given the tools to do so the better. Doing philosophy is not, according to Lipman, a matter of age but of ability to reflect scrupulously and courageously on what one finds important; not to acknowledge the child's capacity to do this is based on

condescending attitudes of adults rather than on evidence. Children are from an early age capable of engaging in rational dialogue, of giving reasons and of defending their point of view and analysing arguments presented by others as well as by themselves:

If we refuse to acknowledge the rationality of children, we cannot satisfactorily engage in philosophical dialogue with them, because we cannot accept their utterances as reasons. If we cannot do philosophy with children, we deprive their education of the very component that might make such education more meaningful (Lipman, 1988, p. 198).

Lipman sees no argument against teaching children the techniques that are associated with philosophy, the beginnings of formal logic, leading them towards philosophy and preparing them for the larger discourses of democratic society. Engaging children in collaborative dialogue has, according to Murriss (2000), importance for individual cognitive and moral development, providing opportunities for growth that far exceed any monological experience.

4.2.2 The dialogical construction of the self

Habermas (1990) saw the cultivation of reasonableness in collaborative reflection and argumentation as playing a central role in moral development. Morality is thus viewed as being concerned with the giving of reasons and the attempt to persuade others of the rightness of one's moral position. Habermas extended Kohlberg's model to include the development of a capacity to enter into argumentation. Unlike the development of a capacity for moral judgement, the development of a capacity for argumentation incorporates the social capacity for entering into argumentation, as well as the mere cognitive capacity to generate or criticize arguments in a formal sense (Young, 1992). Like Aristotle's notion of habituation in the virtues, Habermas advocates immersion in the life world through social interaction and social discourse, in a setting of interdependence. His account moves the notion of self from the monological account of Kant to that of a dialogical self. Also referred to as a theory of communicative action, it is a meta-ethical theory where participants in collaborative argumentation advance the thinking of the whole group and thereby come to reflect on their own thinking. He claims that only an inter-subjective process of reaching understanding can produce an agreement that is reflexive in nature. It can give the participants the knowledge that they have collectively become partners in arriving at important conclusions.

In the cooperative process of argumentation, Habermas argues that a kind of discourse and real learning takes place which could never occur in a strictly monological form (1990, p. 68). He takes his account of the development of rationality from Piaget and Kohlberg – that development entails moving from one stage of moral reasoning to another, that the order of the stages is invariant and that they provide a universal basis for evaluating moral development. Respect as a basic value in morality is emphasised. Individual interests and shared values need to be clarified collaboratively and cannot be considered the preserve of the solitary thinker. Autonomy in Habermas's account must be reconsidered as communicative autonomy, with participants engaging effectively in critical discourse.

Habermas's stress on discourse with the centrality of reason emphasises the importance of inquiry and its place in community. However, the pre-requisite of consensual agreement leaves Habermas's theory open to criticism that it does not provide a full account of morality (Sprod, 2001, p. 80). A basic assumption in Habermas's communicative discourse is that all who are taking part are aiming at consensus in matters concerned with how to find moral rightness. What is right is that on which all would agree (Habermas, 1990, p. 68). That could pose difficulties when one has to consider different cultural interpretations in morally charged situations. It needs to take account of individual differences in diverse situations. Feminists (Benhabib, 1992) and communitarians (MacIntyre, 1981) accord with Habermas's recognition of the importance of community but advocate modifying his theory to take account of real and embodied persons with emphasis on the concrete rather than the generalised other. Habermas concentrates instead on competent abstract moral thinkers.

Vansieleghem (2005, p. 21) criticises Lipman's *Philosophy for Children* for its emphasis on critical thinking and intellectual development at the expense of relationship and search for meaning, a criticism that is not altogether valid. The same idea is echoed by Noddings in her criticism of discourse ethics, because she considers that the highly constrained nature of the conversation does not meet the needs of real people. She contends that if we are concerned with moving from judgement to action, we must look beyond competence theories and consider an ethic of care. Noddings favours ordinary conversation where our partners in conversation are more important than the topic itself: "When people have loving regard for one another, they can engage in constructive conflict" (Noddings, 1994, p. 116). I would support this emphasis on the affective dimension of teaching and learning, love in the classroom, the teacher as genuine carer

and I think this aspect needs to be accorded greater importance. However I would dispute her attribution of greater value to interlocutors than to the topic in question. Callan contends that if the conversation is about something of moral significance, one has to appreciate the gravity of the situation and understand that one is *not* more important than the topic of conversation. One is never more important than the problems of racism, or any other matter of real moral weight that might arise in thoughtful dialogue (Callan, 1997, p. 204).

Our conception of ourselves is both revealed and shaped through reflection with others. In collaborative dialogue there is opportunity for increasing self-knowledge, increasing knowledge of the good and openness to moral formation. The self and the good are co-defining, learning about the self as well as the other. Just as the body needs to find its bearings in physical space, the self needs to find its bearings in moral or spiritual space (Taylor 1989). In Buber's conception of genuine dialogue each of the participants has in mind the others in their particular beings and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relationship (Buber, 1961, p. 19). Arendt's focus is not on achieving consensus in collaborative dialogue but on understanding. In coming to understand others through mutual dialogue, I also understand myself better. As I make myself public I further understand who I am. I understand my life story a little more than I did before I began the conversation. I never know in advance where a conversation is going to go. I learn to live with uncertainty and ambiguity. The discovery of myself as a person is also the discovery of other persons around me in a community of hearts and minds (Arendt, 1958).

4.2.3 The social construction of the self

It is widely accepted that the social environment into which one is born and raised greatly influences the kind of capacities and cognitive abilities one develops. Interaction with the social world is the crucial factor. Vygotsky (1981) contends that socially based cognition will be more advanced than cognition that is separate from the social world. We may be able to achieve more in cooperation with another than we are capable of alone. Bruner contends that scaffolding of socially meaningful activity is the best way of helping learning (Bruner, 1985, p. 25). Children become more competent thinkers when guided by competent adults who scaffold them towards the next stage until they can perform the task unaided. Vygotsky contends that the child's own activities, in the

course of development, are shaped by the culture and by the reactions of other people. More complex cognitive functioning will be possible in a dialogue between two individuals than is possible for those individuals alone. Vygotsky refers to the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as

the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978a, p. 86).

The child's full potential is reached by the scaffolding or guidance of an adult or with more competent peers. In furthering cognitive and linguistic development the adult must pitch the complexity of the task at a level that is not too far beyond the child's linguistic ability.

In Vygotsky's theory cognitive capacities develop with the growth of social speech and with whole experience. Any higher mental function was external because it was social at some point before becoming an internal mental functioning. Any function in the child's cultural development appears twice or on two planes. First it appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane. First it appears between people as an inter-psychological category and then within the child as an intra-psychological category (Meadows, 1993, p. 237). Internalisation is one of Vygotsky's central concepts. The child through observation and imitation internalises the cognitive skills of the culture and, according to Vygotsky, is shaped by the culture in the course of development. The child develops cognitively through social experiences. With the development of social interaction generalisation becomes possible. The child can reflect on reality in a generalised way.

At the core of Vygotsky's theory is the notion of mediation, the use of mental tools, of which language is the most important, which allows for qualitative change in the child's life. Language is the vital psychological tool for communication and for abstract reflection. Vygotsky contended that it was cooperation and the pooling of ideas that promoted change. Piaget (1965) believed that it was peer conflict that caused the change. In a sense both positions are tenable, being complementary rather than contradictory. The extent to which peers play a role in moral development varies from theory to theory. Some contemporary accounts (Rubin *et al*, 1998; Wertsch, 1984)

suggest that conflicting ideas and differences of opinion actually elicit cooperation between partners.

Cognitive-developmental theorists have tended to focus on the role of peer relationships in moral development to the neglect of the part played by parents. Piaget and Kohlberg held that peers were better able to provide the appropriate experiences that promote moral development but Walker and Hennig (1999) argue that parents' potential impact as agents in their children's moral development has been overlooked. This has been associated with the preponderance that has been given to the cognitive domain to the relative neglect of the affective. Walker and Hennig found that affective factors are salient in moral socialisation in addition to cognitive ones. Parents' interaction styles, ego functioning and level of moral reasoning, used in discussion are predictive of children's subsequent moral reasoning development. The use of real-life dilemmas, rather than an exclusive reliance on hypothetical ones may have more relevance to the child's own experience and may tap affective processes more powerfully. The Walker and Hennig study revealed that parenting style is influential in children's moral development, in contradiction to the minimal role accorded parents by cognitive-developmental theory. They found that the parenting style most conducive to children's development involves supportive Socratic dialogue and Kohlbergian higher-stage moral reasoning. Children's moral development was hampered by parental hostility and conflict and was facilitated by parental support and encouragement. Effective parents are more child-centred and scaffold their child's development by eliciting the child's opinion, drawing out the child's reasoning with appropriate probing questions, and checking for understanding.

I contend that a preoccupation with moral cognition is too limiting; affective factors are important components of effective moral socialisation. Coles (1986) claims that social experience is the major determinant of moral development and does not see much benefit in moral analysis and reflection if it does not lead to moral action. His findings indicate that given favourable family and neighbourhood circumstances, the child becomes an intensely moral creature. Ruby Bridges (*The Moral Life of Children*), an African American child, caught in the struggle for school integration in the southern United States, was able to demonstrate character in action and a quality of mind and heart, displaying courage in the face of danger. Aged only six, she fitted into none of Kohlberg's stages of moral reasoning, and was to influence Coles in reviewing his earlier criteria for evaluating moral development and in finally concluding that character

and honesty are what define the moral domain (Coles, 1986, p. 144). Coles' story emphasises the importance of moral fibre and character in family upbringing, and character is important as virtue ethicists show. However, I am going to show a different kind of emphasis which does not contradict the cogency of what Coles has to say.

4.3 The community of ethical enquiry

4.3.1 Vygotskian learning and meta-cognition

The community of enquiry has a valuable role in fostering communication in a mixed-gender setting, where children can hear the voice of care as well as that of justice. The phrase *community of enquiry* was originally coined by Peirce (1955) and was restricted to scientific enquiry. Since Peirce, the phrase has been broadened to include any kind of enquiry, conducted collaboratively, whether scientific or not. The notion of a community of enquiry presupposes some notion of truth, some notion of the good. Lipman, who set up the movement Philosophy for Children in the late 1960s, regards the community of enquiry as the best format for critical thinking and for creating a society in which excellence flourishes (Lipman, 1991, p. 3). The goal of philosophical enquiry with children transcends the thinking of any one individual. It is a collaborative effort with the whole group and their teacher enquiring together. Becoming more reasonable is broader than deductive logic, though Lipman advocates teaching the beginnings of formal logic at around 12 years of age. It involves full capacity to imagine and to feel, to care for one another as persons, and to think in terms of *we* and not just *I*.

Vygotskian learning theory can be closely allied with the concept of the community of enquiry. Children in such a community can begin to engage in the forms of reasoning that are not yet available to them individually. As we have already seen, participants scaffold each other, learning from each other and questioning their own thinking, enabling the less able pupils to enhance their competency. While the students are driving the inquiry, many competencies will be internalised relatively unthinkingly. Analogical reasoning, an important competency, brings existing knowledge and skills to bear on new information and is central to the processes of learning and transfer. Piaget contended that pre-adolescent children were not capable of analogical reasoning but that view is now widely contested (Matthews, 1984; Goswami, 1991a).

The teacher's role in scaffolding the inquiry is most often that of facilitator. At other times it is devil's advocate, using Socratic probes to stimulate reflective thinking, all the time moving the students towards autonomy and empowering them to think for themselves. They learn to draw appropriate inferences, clarify their thoughts, define concepts and make value judgements. In listening respectfully to opposing views and values they can detach themselves from a self-centred perspective and try to imagine other viewpoints. In letting go of their positions in order to listen openly, they follow the enquiry where it leads. Interacting on an equal footing with others who have different views helps them to reflect on their own beliefs and values.

Developing meta-cognitive awareness in this process helps children to extend their thinking. The central learning thrust is peer-correction, and – through thinking about thinking and reflecting on one's own knowledge – even more importantly, correcting oneself. Disagreement with peers can be a source of meta-cognitive conflict and consequently of meta-cognitive advance. Decentring, being able to take the perspective of the other, plays a vital role in this process. I become finely attuned to what is relevant, what it is that you need to hear or experience in order to share my opinion, whether it be a question, an idea or an affirmation of or challenge to your views.

Quinn sees the value of this meta-reflective process in learning the difference between quarrelling and arguing and how to argue and evaluate well. These skills go some way in equipping students to resist undue pressure and in challenging the tabloid culture with its tendency to deal in conclusions rather than in examining ideas (Quinn, 1997, p. 83). Of course it is not only external pressures such as these that need to be combated but also peer-pressure which is increasingly becoming a concern for parents and teachers. One way of dealing effectively with it, according to Lipman, is not by engaging in futile efforts to eliminate it but by endeavouring to make it rational; and this can be done by converting the classroom into a reasoning community (Lipman, 1988, p. 76). Kohlberg (1981) suggests that this sharing of diverse moral opinions and the experience of moral conflict encourages students in the group to clarify their own moral stances and to integrate the opinions of others into their own moral beliefs. In a moral dilemma discussion, effective dilemmas are those that force the pupils to think more deeply about moral issues. A dilemma dealing with conflict between human life and the law has tremendous potential because most people believe in both the importance of life and in the individual's responsibility to the law in a democracy. Moral dilemma discussions will not of themselves solve behaviour problems in children, but the effects

of meaningful dialogues about rights and responsibilities can carry over into students' lives outside the classroom (Scharf, McCoy & Ross, 1979, p. 44).

4.3.2 Ethical enquiry and education for democracy

A significant other dimension of discussion in a community of enquiry is education for democracy, directly relevant to what we have been discussing. The interactive process of the community of enquiry is an ideal situation for democracy in action and for the preparation of future citizens. In it they are encouraged to think about social values, and to become involved in the life and concerns of their community and society. It is this development of social intelligence and growing sense of autonomy, according to Fisher (1995), that challenges rigid thinking and enables children to become active and effective future citizens. They have an opportunity to discuss values that will motivate them to make a difference for themselves and the community. I have found that some of the dispositions essential to intercultural relations such as cooperation, openness to unfamiliar ways and ideas, and respect for conflicting points of view, are learned in this way. However, respecting and understanding the views of another does not mean according them unqualified approval, a clearer understanding of the basis of disagreement being a desired outcome. Abilities to communicate, negotiate and to respect diverse opinions, deepen understanding of and sensitivity to similarities and differences and are vital aspects of the kind of civic virtue required in a democratic society. McLaughlin stresses the need for the "right kind of openness to diversity"; democratic mutual respect for reasonable differences of moral view requires more than a grudging attitude of "live and let live" (McLaughlin, 1995, pp. 249-250). He contends that critical exploration by pupils should result in their being able to make reflective and informed judgements and hopefully decisions.

Camhy argues that this ability to deal with conflict and opposition and acquire new perceptions enhances children's ability to think creatively with a respect for persons and personhood (Camhy, 1995, p. 119). In the self-correcting practice of the community of enquiry children learn to connect their present experiences with what has already happened in their lives and what they can expect to happen. They make judgements about relationships by comparing things and discerning similarities and differences. This, according to Lipman, is the context for higher-order or complex thinking, thinking that is aware of its own assumptions as well as being conscious of an onus to give

reasons in support of conclusions (Lipman, 1991, p. 23). It is the kind of thinking that makes evaluations and distinctions and that recognises the factors that make for bias and prejudice. It helps to counter children's subjectivism and to arm them with the tools for analysing the situations in which they find themselves and to arrive at sound and reliable conclusions (Lipman & Sharp, 1994, p. 348).

Group solidarity is a feature of an established community of enquiry. Successful philosophic dialogue promotes interpersonal insight and connects us to each other. In thinking aloud I am revealing who I am as a person to others in the group. I become aware of others' personalities, values and biases and in getting to know them I become more aware of myself. An idea then, Morehouse (1990) suggests, is no longer the private possession of one person, rather it becomes community property, created by individuals acting together. In the gradual exploration of an idea in a discussion a kind of unity emerges, though a unity that allows for and is enriched by differentiation and diversity. The dialogue creates a community out of individuals.

An important question, briefly adverted to earlier, concerns the extent to which participation in a community of ethical enquiry leads to moral action. Knowing the good may behave one to act accordingly but does it also enable one to do so? Aristotle took account of this in his analysis of *akrasia* or moral weakness, knowing what it is good to do, but failing nonetheless to do it (NE1145a15-34). Could one reason very plausibly and yet not be a moral person in practice? Yes, one could because the moral strength and integrity that are the essence of character are not guaranteed by verbal reasoning. Nevertheless, the ability to reason verbally indicates knowledge of the situation even if it is not a sufficient condition, as Buber (1961) wryly observes in his example of the best essay on lying being written by the worst habitual liar in the class. If one consistently acts against one's knowledge the price to be paid is some measure of self-censure, and, unless one's moral sensibilities are altogether dulled, some alienation and ultimately fragmentation. The emphasis on reasonableness in the community of enquiry, with children listening actively and thinking together rather than alone, goes some way toward bridging the gap between judgement and action. Indeed, Splitter & Sharp (1995, p. 7) would not describe someone as reasonable "who is able to formulate good judgements, yet cannot or consistently does not, put these judgements into practice".

For habituation to count as virtue it requires judgement and that judgement can be built through engagement in philosophical enquiry. It is not enough for children to

consider the virtues. Philosophising alone is not sufficient for becoming virtuous. Ethical enquiry must aim at linking the conclusions of discussion to the formation of virtuous habits. Only in this sense could the community of enquiry be considered as part of habituation in the Aristotelian sense. It is reasonable to expect that the capacity for moral judgement can make a difference for moral conduct. A person's understanding of moral issues can give us some clues about how the person will approach similar problems as they arise in real life. Studies have shown that children show a greater tendency to share and cooperate with one another as their moral understanding develops. According to Damon, the child's social experience and social influences can turn this moral awareness into moral character (Damon, 1990, p. 50). Experience of communicative discourse in the community of enquiry can contribute to the overall moral climate of respect and cooperation and as such is a *moral practice in itself*. Lipman & Sharp argue that moral education cannot be divorced from philosophical education. The cultivation of children's moral dispositions and the improvement of their moral judgements should result from our provoking them in many ways, exercising their powers of discrimination and reflection (Lipman & Sharp, 1994, p. 366). It implies a changed role for the teacher as that of facilitator of good discussion, helping the students to reflect on and justify their beliefs.

4.3.3 The role of the teacher

The teacher's role in Lipman's model is that of talented questioner throughout the discussion, stimulating and provoking reflective thinking in a setting of empathy and trust. The teacher is alert not only to what is being said and how the various members of the group interpret it but he or she must help them to challenge each other's assumptions. The teacher's role is daunting initially because he or she requires considerable skill in dealing with sensitive issues and needs to exercise judgement as to what is appropriate. It involves the possession by the teacher of a form of pedagogic *phronesis* (Halstead & McLaughlin, 1999; McLaughlin, 2000). Partly, the aim is to advance the discussion to a higher level of generality. In true Socratic dialogue the teacher is likened to a gad-fly, challenging assumptions and provoking thoughtfulness in a wondering rather than knowing way. The teacher is also an ethical model, a model of integrity and of good discussion with which pupils can identify. Lipman contends that it is only by teachers showing the importance, for example, of making appropriate

distinctions and classifications and by manifesting a love for such distinctions and classifications in their everyday behaviour that children learn to do likewise (Lipman, 1988, p. 100).

Part of the purpose of a philosophical discussion, if it is to be deemed successful, is a move in the conversation away from the specific and in the direction of the general, and sometimes from the general back to the specific, from what is to what could be, and/or what ought to be. Kohlberg (1981) saw the teacher's role as stimulating conflict and guiding students towards a resolution of the conflict. His criteria for success in moral reasoning in a moral dilemma discussion would be movement from one stage to the next in his six-stage sequence, with the teacher actively trying to promote upward stage change. Research on this (Berkowitz, Gibbs & Broughton, 1980) found that this was a difficult task for the teacher in an actual discussion. Peer statements were found to have greater impact on the group than the input of the teacher. In my own practice, the Irish model, Thinking Time, uses the community of inquiry in a somewhat different way to that of Lipman although the ultimate aim is broadly similar. There is less direct questioning by the teacher and more scope for open-ended discussion (Donnelly, 1998; Russell, 2002). The role of the teacher in modelling and scaffolding is still very important but it is significantly mediated through its influence on students who then influence each other. The goal is maximum student-student interaction. Children will take note of what their peers think and peer influence matters significantly in early adolescence (Damon & Killen, 1982; Damon, 1990).

For enquiry to be successful, one needs to have an intuitive feel for what sort of question is appropriate to each situation and what stories, poems or other triggers best motivate philosophical thinking. One also learns with experience when it is best to intervene and when not to. With practice, the teacher gets a sense of progress in the discussion, a sense of forward movement or progress towards a kind of consensus or understanding. One needs to be sensitive to the child in the group who has not yet found a voice but who listens attentively to the contributions of others. There is some research evidence to suggest that careful listening is more important than speaking (Sprod, 1998). In Thinking Time, unlike the Habermasian model, consensus is not the ultimate aim, the process itself being the important factor. To do philosophy well, Matthews suggests one must release the questioning child in oneself and be prepared to give up adult pretensions to know. Children have a freshness and inventiveness and a curiosity that is in sharp contrast with the staleness that all too often is taken as a sign of maturity.

Learning to puzzle over something and to be comfortable with naïve questions is an important part of doing philosophy well (Matthews, 1994, p. 13).

Lind's (2001) moral dilemma discussion model, which is an updated version of the Blatt-Kohlberg (1975) one, advises that the teacher should refrain from giving an opinion unless specifically asked to do so by the pupils. The aim here is that the teacher would confine him/herself to the role of moderator and not in any way dominate the discussion. Maintaining the role of didactic authority as is often exercised in routine classroom practice could inhibit pupils if that same situation were to obtain in a community of inquiry. Questions can be asked whether the teacher should then model neutrality. I believe he or she should not because to model neutrality could convey the message that neutrality on moral issues is to be condoned. There is a danger here of moral indifference. Sprod argues that in the community of inquiry the teacher can and ought to express views. He considers a non-judgemental acceptance of certain extreme positions to be in itself immoral. Still, a direct intervention by the teacher may militate against significant learning by the pupils. One has to guard against ethical relativism (Sprod, 2001, p. 178). It is the understanding that views are not immune from criticism – while in many cases they may also be reasonably defended against it – that avoids ethical relativism. Open-mindedness involves being open to having one's views challenged and being disposed to revising them in the light of evidence and argument (Hare & McLaughlin, 1998, p. 289).

To be truly successful in the role of teacher whether it is as facilitator in a community or leader in any other aspect of education, one must be open whole-heartedly to full engagement. Noddings contends that the capacity to care is as much a mark of personhood as reason or rationality. Love in the classroom is a commitment to the whole experience and engagement with the other as a "Thou" (Noddings, 1992, p. 24). This implies being open to the different ways of knowing and feeling, of combining love and intuition in all approaches (Noddings, 1984, p. 175). It implies being fully receptive to the other in a caring and compassionate way. It is what Simone Weil calls attentiveness – the soul emptying itself of all its own contents (what Murdoch refers to as "the fat relentless ego") in order to receive into itself the being it is looking at, in all its truth (Weil, 1951, p. 115). We challenge children's intellectual and moral reasoning but never their integrity or worth. Dialogue can thus serve another purpose in moral education, in helping us connect with each other and maintain caring relations and instil in each other a sense of our own worth.

4.4 The role of story and imagination

4.4.1 Story and the moral imagination

One of the most powerful ways of helping us to engage emotionally with others is through story. Story enables us to feel with others, to see beyond the actual to possibilities and to make choices. In using a story as trigger for moral discussion, the choice of the right kind of story is important. It can be the key that opens the door to wonder, to speculation and to moral imagination. Philosophy begins in wonder, in the imaginative capacity that appeals to the poetic sense in our nature. It begins in the whole-hearted love of wisdom, according to Plato and Aristotle. Aristotle contends that a man who wonders thinks himself ignorant and the purpose of philosophising is to escape ignorance (Dunne, 1998, p. 15). Can children be schooled without losing their sense of wonder? School in many Western societies has a utilitarian focus, catering to the demands of the market place which values productivity, to the neglect of affective and imaginative thinking. To redress the balance, as teachers we need to take seriously and be attentive to the reflections of children and to stimulate the moral imagination through the use of stories. Stories point beyond the self to wonder and to possibilities. We use our imagination “not to escape the world but to join it, and this exhilarates us because of the distance between our ordinary dulled consciousness and our apprehension of the real” (Murdoch, 1970, p. 88). The story can enable new ways of understanding and perceiving, facilitating imaginative philosophical dialogue. Children, in identifying with the story characters, become conscious of themselves in relation to others and to ideas and culture of which they are a part.

Throughout history, oral cultures through the power of myth and imagination interpreted human action and its setting in the cosmos. Narrative structure is at the core of the formation of the self and we cannot underestimate the power of myth and imagination for deepening our understanding of human relationships. Man “in his actions and practice as well as in his fictions is”, according to MacIntyre, “essentially a story-telling animal” (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 201). He argues that the ability to follow stories is connected with the ability to make sense of human experience because our lives are themselves narratively structured and it is primarily through narratives that they are made intelligible.

Traditionally, stories have played an important role in the moral education of children, especially in regard to portraying moral character, for example, the parables of Jesus or the fables of Aesop. Among contemporary theorists Lipman (1988) and Matthews (1984) are the most widely known proponents of the philosophical abilities of children and both have written stories to illustrate these abilities and to guide practitioners as to the potential of the story. A teacher needs to have a wide variety of stories that stimulate the imagination and engage the emotions. Stories have a value in educating us into the virtues because they can contribute to flexibility in thinking and to a sense of tolerance and justice. Egan (1992) is emphatic that the central place of story in education needs to be restored. Young children live in an oral culture and the stories that interest them deal in abstract binary opposites (already mentioned) such as bravery and cowardice, good and evil, security and fear. What children find meaningful must be articulated on some powerful abstraction. Egan contends that to teach concrete content, untied to powerful abstractions, is to starve the imagination; children's imagination is engaged, not by focusing on the immediate world around them, but by the most distant and exotic.

In Egan's Romantic phase from age eight to fifteen, what fires children's imagination are the extremes and limits of human experience and the natural world. This is more characteristic of male development, while compassionate engagement and empathy with distinct forms of experience is more characteristic of female thinking. In this way the children make sense of their surroundings. Identifying with the heroic, moving towards what one admires or wonders at or regards with awe and perhaps revolting against adult conventions, marks this Romantic phase. It is a period also marked by ambivalence, revolting against the world of the adult while at the same time trying to find one's place in it. Egan suggests humanizing knowledge and making it more meaningful by engaging the fears, hopes and emotions of the child. He suggests achieving this by presenting lessons and units as good stories to be told rather than as blocks of knowledge to be sorted. The tool we have for dealing with knowledge and emotions together is the story (Egan, 1992, p. 70). I have found this to be the case in my many years of experience with the community of enquiry.

4.4.2 Story in the community of enquiry

The choice of story or trigger text is crucial not only in influencing critical and creative thinking but in engaging the pupils' interest and imagination. If we want children to become reflective adults, Lipman (1988) argues, we must encourage them to be reflective children. He decided that the best way to teach children to think was through stories. The fictional models in Lipman's stories, for example, *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery*, depict children as thinking beings, capable of rational and creative engagement. By means of fictional models, Lipman claims it is possible to show children that they themselves can think more reasonably and more creatively (Lipman, 1988, p. 187). Characters in the stories discuss everyday problems concerned with what words mean and how we use them and also philosophical topics such as the nature of thinking and the way the mind works. Matthews (1984) encourages children to puzzle over ordinary happenings and events that they take for granted. One such event is the restoration of the old ship *Maria Magdalena*. Is it still the old ship if 85% of its wood is restored? How much of the original wood needs to be there before you can call it the old ship? (Matthews, 1984, p. 38). There is no easy solution but much to puzzle over.

Socratic irony characterises Arnold Lobel's Frog and Toad stories, geared towards the child up to eight years old. In these stories the children are invited to analyse an important concept. How can they tell if Frog and Toad are really brave? Are they cowardly because they ran away? Or would they have been foolish to stand bravely and be eaten by the snake? Aristotle distinguishes between bravery and foolhardiness, a distinction that makes fear an integral part of bravery. In these stories, children analyse key moral concepts and learn to appreciate distinctions. Frog and Toad think of bravery in terms of physical courage. Moral courage, Pritchard contends, is another kind of bravery, and admitting that one has made a serious mistake sometimes requires as much courage as facing physical dangers bravely (Pritchard, 1996, p. 20).

Good trigger texts represent a recognisable fragment of the life-world and fictional characters can express dissident views and introduce diversity into the community. Cam's (1997) *Thinking Stories 3* focus on moral and social issues and are a valuable guide to teachers, concerned with exploring ethical issues. The stories raise questions and problems that have a philosophical twist. They are of interest especially to pre-adolescent children growing up in an urban neighbourhood. The characters in the narratives model good enquiry and sometimes fall from reasonableness in some way that leaves it open to the community to criticize. Many of our discussions in the

community of ethical enquiry deal with disagreements and uncertainties about what is right and wrong, how we come by a knowledge of right and wrong and who is to decide what is right and what is not. Joshua in Cam's story *The Fight* says he doesn't care what other people think because he knows what he did was right. He tries to sustain his own moral judgement against what he presumes are the assumptions of his parents and adult society in his search for a degree of moral autonomy. The stories concerning issues of freedom and responsibility, children's rights, racial and other intolerance, exploring the boundaries of acceptable behaviour, raise many questions. To what extent should society decide what is right and wrong and to what extent should that rest with the individual? By making thought the subject of discussion children's attention is drawn to their own thinking.

My experience with the community of enquiry (Russell, 2002) suggests that the stories chosen need to have a rich narrative structure. They need to engage not just the critical aspect of thinking but, as already mentioned, the emotional aspect. Kohlberg's dilemmas tend to draw on a narrow picture of moral reasoning and lack the detailed outline of character and context that is so rich in Cam's stories. When the emotional aspects of the characters' lives are portrayed, the children in the community of inquiry engage more with the committed aspects of thinking. A rich literary text contains invitations to enter the text imaginatively and through its portrayal of a realistic life-world will assist students in integrating their moral enquiry into their lived experience. Coles speaks of the immediacy that a story can possess as it connects persuasively with human experience. Stories, with their lyrical magic insinuating itself into our various separate lives, can offer us "kinsmen, kinswomen, comrades, advisers – offer us other eyes with which we might make soundings" (Coles, 1989, pp. 159-160).

A similar point is made by B. & S. Norfolk who suggest in *Folk Tales for Character Development* (a collection of tales from diverse cultures) that stories teach by attraction rather than compulsion and invite rather than impose. They see the story-teller's role as providing a non-judgemental space for discussion and exploration in which stories are allowed to work their magic (B. & S. Norfolk, 1999, p. 23). Children must be allowed to hear, question and analyse others' opinions in the safety zone of story. Through that process they will be empowered to make more informed judgements and choices. In this environment a real sense of community grows, a group that cares and shares together in a supportive environment.

Should children be free to tell their own stories or personal anecdotes in a community of ethical enquiry? There are contrary views among theorists on this issue. Some caution against the over-use of anecdotes in philosophical enquiry unless there is a compelling reason to share them because of the danger of dissipating the discussion and losing the focus of the argument (Reed, 1992c, p. 24). I contend that there has to be a place for the telling of anecdotes in a community of ethical enquiry. In telling their own stories the children are connecting the substance of the enquiry to their own experience; anecdotes have emotional attachments for the tellers and they are motivational for them. Sprod contends that the sharing of anecdotes is a part of the process of creating an inter-subjective world. As we have already seen, ethical enquiry has much to do with contexts, commitments and embodiment, especially in interrelationships with others (Sprod, 2001, p. 197).

A story is more engaging if it provokes philosophical reflection rather than uncritical acceptance of a virtue. Missing from Bennet's (1993) collection, *The Book of Virtues*, are stories that invite children to reflect on why taking one course of action is preferable to another. Bennet's stories and poems are intended to present the traditional virtues which he deems central to moral education. His contention is that these stories speak of morality and virtues not as something to be possessed, but as the central part of human nature (Bennet, 1993, p. 14). They are intended to be read by parents and children together to deepen their own and their children's moral understanding. Many of the stories illustrate a virtue or a vice. Bennet's critics find fault more with what is left out rather than what is included. Pritchard notes that justice, one of the central Aristotelian virtues, is not one of the special chapter headings in *The Book of Virtues*. Neither are respect or tolerance, virtues important in multicultural societies (Pritchard, 1996, p. 103). Nussbaum contends that the stories have serious short-comings in that they are simplistic, reflect Bennet's political conservatism, especially in the early chapters, and do not advance to more reflective levels (Nussbaum, in Pritchard, 1996, p. 99). Stories, when they stimulate reflection, can point to new pathways and new visions of what is important in life. Used wisely in a community of enquiry, they can enable children to engage in critical and imaginative discussion that ultimately encourages the development of the moral intellect.

4.5 Gender and moral orientation

4.5.1 Middle to late childhood

The final issue which will be of considerable significance in my later analysis is the issue of gender and I will conclude this chapter by examining some of the theory on gender and moral orientation from middle and late childhood to early adolescence. Theorists do not, as a rule, give precise ages for when early childhood ends and middle childhood begins. Middle childhood is generally taken to be school-going age. Similarly there are no clear dividing lines according to age for when late childhood ends or early adolescence begins. The onset of puberty (at ages now lower in the west than in previous generations) generally indicates early adolescence.

In middle childhood, belonging to same-sex peer group assumes considerable significance. In same-sex groups primary school children develop ideas about and practice social skills associated with the two orientations of care and justice (Langdale, 1993, p. 49). Boys emphasise group solidarity; the rules of their games become more elaborate and they prefer to play formal competitive games in teams. Langdale contends that while boys use the group in their quest for recognition, jockeying for position within the group, girls in contrast form clubs to exclude other girls, tending to view their group as a network of intimate relationships rather than a hierarchy. Girls seem to be more concerned with maintaining relationships while boys are concerned with managing hierarchies. Piaget (1932) contended that relationships with peers provide an important context for the development of children's concepts of justice and the social skills associated with the justice orientation. Langdale contends that same-sex relationships are the context in which girls develop the care orientation and concern with others' needs in nurturant behaviour. What is noteworthy, according to Langdale, is the absence among boys of preoccupation with care orientation, and consequently the absence of opportunities to develop the social knowledge and skills acquired through this behaviour in their same-sex peer relationships.

For both sexes the move from concrete to formal operations is one of the central tasks of late childhood. Conflicting attitudes and beliefs mark the new interpersonal world (Scharf *et al*, 1979, p. 13). Scharf *et al* contend that in late childhood from about age ten to twelve there is further development in both male and female capacity for empathy. There is a developing sensitivity that manifests itself in altruistic behaviour.

The children begin to be able to judge friends, relatives and peers from vantage points other than their own. Added to this is a wider understanding of the world in which they live and a growing political awareness. Children can expand the scope of their thinking and develop a new sensitivity for the outcast, the poor and the handicapped. It is in this period too that guilt for harming or overlooking another is experienced; their own moral emotions are interpreted in light of the moral reactions of others (Scharf *et al*, 1979, p. 29). Biases can be reduced to tolerable levels by socialisation and education that emphasises human commonalities and impartiality. According to Hoffman, increased understanding fosters empathy, not only with those with whom they are familiar, but also with strangers and others whom our actions affect although they are absent (Hoffman, 1993, p. 178).

4.5.2 Early adolescence

By early adolescence not only is the child's perspective on the world changing but also his or her conception of both self and others changes. This shift often manifests in increased self-consciousness. Because of the uncertainty that the early adolescent experiences some theorists refer to this as a time of crisis in search of identity. Elkind (1980) terms it pre-adolescent egocentrism. The early adolescent is between sources of emotional support, breaking away from the family while his or her own more independently generated sources of support are not yet established. Around this time peer relations become very significant. According to Damon and Hart, same-sex friendships become imbued with qualities of loyalty and intimacy. Friends understand one another as "persons". Friends share abilities, interests and inner experiences and the friend has a distinct personality that differs from one's own. Children make careful choices about whom they will have as friends. The group is replaced by the dyad and chum-ships become the norm (Damon & Hart, 1988, p. 301).

Damon (1990, p. 83) contends that boys develop the notion that they are essentially different from significant others in their lives, whereas girls develop a belief in similarity and connectedness between themselves and others. Gilligan (1982) suggests that the reason that men stress rules and fairness is that males acquire an orientation of separateness during their development. On the other hand an orientation towards connectedness and sensitivity towards the needs of others are the mark of a morality of care which tends to be associated with girls. Her contention is that care-oriented moral

judgements tend to be classified at lower stages than justice-oriented judgements (in Kohlberg's scale of measurement of moral judgement) and consequently females are disadvantaged. Krebs and his colleagues dispute this. Their findings do not support the idea that the justice orientation of Kohlberg's test disadvantages females. The amount of care evidenced in moral judgements is primarily a function of the type of dilemma. The results of the Krebs study suggest that similarities between the sexes exceed their differences. Therefore methods designed to enhance moral development should be more or less applicable to both sexes. Care is not the exclusive province of females and nor is justice that of males and optimal moral development requires attention to both (Krebs, *et al*, 1994, p. 225).

Gilligan also notes the inattention to girls. What has been missed out by not studying girls is an understanding of their relationships, a different conception of self and morality and different ways of knowing (Gilligan, 1993, p. 106). There is, according to Gilligan, a need for new concepts and new categories of interpretation. The assessment of sex differences cannot be undertaken until female development is better understood. Care concerns need to be the focus of a coherent moral perspective rather than a sign of deficiency in women's moral reasoning. The over-riding emphasis placed by psychologists on self-sufficiency is, Gilligan argues, at odds with the human condition. Separation, individuation and autonomy as marks of maturity, are, she claims, at odds with the interdependence of adult life and are contributory to the culture of narcissism. She queries whether such an emphasis can sustain the long-term commitments necessary for raising and educating a child for citizenship in a democratic society. Moral maturity would imply being able to speak in both care and justice terms.

Langdale (1993) suggests that more importance is attached to boys' perceptions and behaviours in the moral development literature and that there is a tendency not to attach developmental significance to those of girls. Boys' experience is taken as modal for what is developmentally advantageous while that of girls is perceived as a developmental handicap. Piaget (1932) saw the complexity of boys' play as ground-work for later moral development while the complexity of girls' play went unnoticed and was seen as a deficit. The over-valuation of the male-justice perspective in boys risks limiting them in the development of inter-personal skills. Langdale contends that the shared interest and activity-based friendships of men and the shared intimacies of women's friendships have their roots in the pattern of gender identity and moral orientation established in same-sex peer relationships in early and middle childhood

(Langdale, 1993, p. 54). I would concur with Langdale that both moral voices need to be consciously included in the materials and stories presented to children for fostering their social and moral development and, accordingly, I will be trying to ensure that both moral voices will be represented (Part II of this study).

Garrod & Beal (1993) contend that it is not yet clear whether the use of orientations is gender-linked and concede that as yet there is no consistent method for coding moral orientation in real-life dilemmas. Kohlberg's hypothetical dilemmas are framed as problems of competing rights and therefore it is difficult to detect concerns about care when such concerns are expressed. Garrod & Beal suggest that as children become more advanced in cognitive development, they are able to consider different viewpoints in a moral conflict. Social class, ethnicity, and marginalisation may be as much a determinant of predominant orientation as is gender (Garrod & Beal, 1993, pp. 61-70). Walker (1987) found that although concerns with rights and justice rather than care dominated children's real-life dilemmas, with maturity there was an increased use of mixed orientation.

Damon contends that children's morality is contextually determined and that education may have a greater part to play than gender in moral judgement. The care ethic seems to be more dominant in societies where girls have a nurturing role. Damon attributes the gender difference in children's approach to morality to the different ways in which boys and girls are treated when they are young. Social experience seems to be the crucial factor. According to Damon, there is good reason to believe that gender differences in moral orientation can disappear under new social circumstances. Men can value caring just as much as women can value justice. The child's moral thinking and behaviour is mediated by the child's social experience and not by gender directly (Damon, 1990, pp. 90-103). Scharf argues that accelerated moral development is encouraged in environments which stimulate moral conflict, encourage role-taking, emphasise interaction and are seen by children to be fair (Scharf, 1979, p. 26).

4.6 Conclusion

Critical discourse is one way through which the school can enhance moral awareness and moral consciousness. Helping children to develop their capacity for reasonableness calls for empowering them rather than indoctrinating them. Children's thinking cannot

take a great leap forward without their developing “meta-thinking” (Quinn, 1997, p. 8). According to Quinn, they must become not just thinkers, but thinkers about their own thinking, questioning answers rather than answering questions. Hare (1964) saw teaching children to think as the best means of empowering them. Given the bewildering array of values, principles and ideologies that surround the young person, the only solution is to teach as many people as possible to think as well as possible. My experience would indicate that one of the most effective ways of leading children towards autonomous thought and action and towards self-direction is to engage them in enquiry (Russell, 2002). Setting up a classroom community of ethical enquiry where children sit in a circle and engage collaboratively in philosophical and moral reflection, has an important part to play in the development of ethical persons. In dialogue children make sense of the whole and their individual part in it and learn to appreciate the good, the beautiful, truth and reality. It provides the opportunity not just to be critical thinkers, but to become creative and caring thinkers where self-transcendence takes precedence over self-expression.

In promoting reasonableness we are encouraging children to think for themselves. This entails making moral judgements, choices and decisions. The cognitive-developmental theories of Piaget and Kohlberg focused on moral judgement reasoning rather than moral actions and behaviour. Kohlberg later set about dealing with this question of follow-through to democratic living when he set up his Just Community schools. Children need to be encouraged to act upon their moral judgements because judgement and action together are both necessary components of morality. In the child’s deliberations in the community of enquiry, the justification for reasons has a moral aspect of itself. If we want to influence action we need to take into consideration the affective dimension, the part played by emotions as well as principles. In taking the perspective of the other into account we come to know ourselves and acquire sensitivity to the needs and welfare of others.

Encouraging philosophical reflection is widely recognised as children’s best ally in negotiating their way in an increasingly uncertain world where the parameters are no longer clear and pressures of all sorts contribute to confusion and a blurring of vision. As embodied agents, living in dialogical conditions we make sense of our lives as story that connects the past from which we have come to our future projects. By engaging in constructive debate such as in a community of ethical enquiry we are in a better position to overcome the drift towards atomism and instrumentalism and pursue a more vigorous

and democratic life. This, according to Taylor (1991, p. 120) is our armour in overcoming fragmentation and powerlessness and shallow modes of authenticity. The role of education is crucial here in stimulating the moral imagination. We need to foster not just critical but creative and caring thinkers who have concern for the welfare of others and are positively disposed towards personal responsibility in a democratic society. It is to a consideration of how this might be translated into practice that I turn now in the second part of this study.

**PART II - CLASSROOM PRACTICE: A QUALITATIVE
ANALYSIS**

5 COGNITIVE CHANGE AND DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Introduction

My goal in undertaking fieldwork for this research was to examine moral thinking in a chosen sample of participants in a community of enquiry. It was carried out, as I explained in chapter one, in a mixed gender primary school in a middle class urban area. I first began to work with this particular group of children when they were in 2nd class at ages ranging between seven and eight and continued to work with them when they moved to the Senior School (beginning in 3rd class), recording their dialogues in the succeeding years until the end of the primary school cycle in 6th class, age eleven to twelve. In all, the data collection spanned through five school years with a gap of one and a half years in the middle. I used the Thinking Time – Philosophy with Children format where the children sit in a circle with the teacher taking part as facilitator and participant-observer.

In this chapter, while my overall purpose is moral awareness, I will be looking at the children's thinking processes in middle childhood when I first made contact with them, and following them through to late childhood and early adolescence. This will involve examining the changes that occurred over time as well as the skills the children acquired through participation in the community of enquiry such as the ability to deduce, infer, make connections, hypothesise, make good distinctions, order and classify, and generalise from the particular. How the children developed concepts, expressed their views – taking the perspective of others into account, and the language they used will be the focus of much of my study. I will not be focusing on moral content in this chapter as this will be dealt with in detail in the next chapter. Many of the skills I will be looking at might be considered generic; my interest here has specific reference to moral reasoning and the processes brought into play in discussing moral issues. The gains and losses from earlier to later modes of thinking in this period will be explored. My role both as facilitator and participant-observer, stimulating reasoning, scaffolding or supporting the children's thinking while at the same time relinquishing, to a large extent, my role of teacher in charge, will merit attention. The group dynamic, gender similarities and differences, levels of participation and scaffolding by more able pupils, will be probed. In quoting the children I have used their exact words without editing

them and have given them pseudonyms instead of real names. The transcripts range from 1 to 47 and consequently the transcript number will be an indication of how early in the research the discussion took place.

5.2 Cognitive style in middle childhood

5.2.1 Thinking collaboratively: moving towards a community of enquiry

Middle childhood is generally understood as the school-age years from age about five up to about ten; thereafter the period leading up to adolescence is referred to as late childhood, leading into pre-adolescence at age about eleven (Rubin, Bukowski and Parker, 1998). In this research I will deal first with the Thinking Time process in middle childhood at age seven to eight when I first encountered this group. Collaborating in dialogue was a process that evolved over time. Initially we had a long settling in period with each child giving his or her opinion, paying scant attention to what others had said, more in the nature of self-serving monologue than dialogue. In the early days the ground rules and norms had to be spelled out at the beginning of the session. These emphasised the need to listen to others, respect others, wait for one's turn to speak, give reasons for one's opinion and say what one believed to be true. Justifying one's reasons sometimes proved difficult for some children whose best contribution often consisted of agreeing verbatim with what others had said e.g. "*I agree with Barry*". For others the best contribution consisted in being funny and eliciting a laugh and sometimes self-consciousness manifested in giggling. I was satisfied at first with any brief contribution because having a voice and speaking in the group when all eyes were upon one could be daunting for some. To a large extent I had to follow my own procedure but had some idea of what an ideal dialogue session consisted of, having participated in a couple of sessions of my then colleague, Philomena Donnelly.

For about the first ten sessions I intervened frequently, urging where possible for justification of reasons, or for respect for others in the group, aiming all the time to raise the thinking to more reflective levels. Gradually the children began to listen to each other more and to base their comments on refutation of what had been said. I was aware of the need for sensitivity towards the feelings of those who did not speak and was conscious of the need to put them at ease by stressing the value of listening and pointing out that listening to what others had said was a contribution in itself.

The fourth session marked a turning point when some children used the terms “*I agree with*” and “*I disagree with*”, giving reasons in these instances. It meant the beginning of argumentation and active listening and also the beginning of a living mutual relation between participants. In all the dialogues and particularly the earlier ones, some children’s irrelevant contributions seemed to dissipate the argument but there were some strong participants who remained focused, picking up on points made earlier and bringing the discussion back on track. My focus in the early dialogues was on stimulating reflective thinking and getting the children accustomed to the format.

At an early stage I decided to focus explicitly on moral thinking; already of course I had ample opportunity to observe how the children dealt with themes such as fairness, bravery, ugliness and beauty. One could see development in grappling with complex moral issues. In a good discussion contributions reinforced and built on one another and there would be a sense of forward movement. Many times children needed to tell anecdotes and even though this often dissipated the discussion, the story being long and sometimes not relevant, a certain degree of understanding was necessary because some children needed to connect the discussion with their own worlds and find a pathway through their own concrete experience. Occasionally some children felt undermined when others challenged their opinions and I had to explain that this was a positive thing as their contributions had proved thought provoking. One instance of this was when we discussed the rights and wrongs of using animals in experiments and one of the more confident speakers in the group counted the number of people, eleven in all, who disagreed with him, and then thanked the people who agreed with him. This was the time for me to point out that people disagreed with what one said and not because of whether they liked or disliked one. It was necessary to emphasise that we argued, not for the sake of winning or scoring points over another but for the sake of truth, which is at the core of Philosophy with Children. The give-and-take of the dialogue process could not be taken for granted but continued practice made way for openness and vulnerability, as also attested to by Splitter & Sharp (1995).

Learning to take the perspective of others and understanding the viewpoints of those with whom they strongly disagreed was one of the first remarkable turning points in the children’s discussions. It could only be acquired through active discussion, learning to calibrate the workings of their minds with or sometimes against one another. Empathising with others and sharing their feeling states is, according to Kagan (1987), one of the important factors that motivate us to act. As time went on the children were

able to deal with more abstract concepts. In our discussions we explored concepts such as bravery, willpower, freedom, responsibility and fairness during this first year. A discussion about whether Frog and Toad in Arnold Lobel's well known story were brave led to exploring the concept of bravery and whether one needed to do something dangerous to be brave. One boy, aged eight, summed it up thus: "*I think being brave is facing up to your fears*" (tr8). Another, seeing fear in a more concrete form, disagreed: "*You know when you said that thing about facing up to your fears. I disagree with you because if your fear is bigger than you he could kill you before you have a chance to face up to him*" (tr8). Many in these early discussions were non-committal or ambiguous: "*They were kind of brave and kind of not*" (tr8). In this they were perhaps confirming Matthews' contention that it is extremely difficult to have a definite conception of the notion of bravery (Matthews, 1984, p. 23).

5.2.2 Beginnings of reflective thinking

In all the discussions I was mindful of the need to avail of opportunities to raise the level of thinking and to note the hallmarks of reflective thinking: inferring, deducing, defining, making distinctions, classifying and generalising. Some topics proved more fruitful than others in stimulating reflection as the following extracts of dialogue will demonstrate. An early discussion with the children on "What is thinking?" led to speculation about whether animals could think and many thought they could, otherwise "*How can a lion kill a human if he doesn't think it's possible?*" (tr6). The children mulled over whether animals are sentient beings. Some thought animals could think because "*spiders can think up how to make a web and birds, they can think up how to make a nest*" (tr7); "*hamsters are very clever because they have whiskers to use to fit in a hole. They'd have to measure the whiskers and see if they'd be able to fit in the hole*" (tr7).

Con, one of the more articulate in the class, drew the children's attention to the distinction between conscious deliberation and instinctive promptings and pointed out that copying patterns of behaviour did not constitute thinking: "*They don't know much. See, they only know what their parents have done and they copy their parents. If elephants could think they'd be open to lots of other stuff. They'd be able to attack us to stop us from catching them*" (tr7). Some reckoned, from the perspective of their own

way of thinking, that awareness and fear go together: *“I think animals can think because if they couldn’t think they wouldn’t be scared of things”* (tr7).

Generalising from the particular usually came mid-way or later in the discussion. After much deliberation, somewhere beyond the mid-way point, someone concluded: *“Animals and humans are the same. It’s just the brain that makes it different”* (tr7). My question as to whether a bigger brain means a cleverer mammal elicited the response *“The bigger the brain it’s the more they can hold in the brain. It’s not the most they can know. If it’s the most they can know, elephants would be able to invent the airplane before us”* (tr7). Here was an eight-year-old attempting to associate thinking with knowing and to make good distinctions.

At age seven to eight the children were fascinated by dinosaurs and modern day reptiles. Their discussions saw attempts at classifying and correcting what they perceived to be fallacies: *“Crocodiles aren’t dinosaurs. They’re reptiles”* (tr13). This was taken a stage further with the explanation that some things could belong to more than one category: *“I think you’re sort of right. You see crocodiles were here at the time of the dinosaurs so they are sort of reptiles. In a way they’re sort of reptiles and in a way they’re sort of dinosaurs”* (tr13).

Deductive reasoning was emerging; if apes are classified as animals then, because of our common ancestry, we must be animals too: *“Humans used to be once apes and when man was first developed he acted like the ape until he developed more and got a bigger brain and acted more like himself. So I think animals and humans are the same because the monkey is an animal and the human is related to the monkey, so they have to be animal as well”* (tr7).

These questions and the value placed on rationality are engaging many in the field of bio-ethics. Some philosophers such as Singer argue that the difference between us and gorillas and chimpanzees are differences in degree rather than of kind. He claims that there is a solid body of evidence that animals are self-conscious and that apes can be trained to use the sign language of deaf people (Singer, 1993, p. 111).

There was a sense of forward movement when the children engaged animatedly with the topic under discussion. The examination of abstract concepts such as goodness, truth, honesty and beauty called for good stories and poems as triggers for reflection. To explore the concept of beauty, we discussed Gina Wilson’s poem *Prowlpuss* which charted the adventures of a scruffy one-eyed, one-eared alley cat, hated by his neighbours for his noisy nightly antics, but much loved by his owner. The children

greatly engaged with the underdog (or undercat!) in this poem who, despite his ugliness, brought great joy to his owner. Various definitions of beauty and ugliness were elicited: *“I think there is such a thing as true beauty. True beauty is when you are beautiful on the inside and ugly on the outside. That’s still true beauty, but if you’re beautiful on the outside and beautiful in the inside, that’s double beauty”* (tr9). An advance in thinking was marked by going beyond the actual text to define a concept. Beauty was synonymous with caring: *“I think that beauty is if you love somebody and you really care about them”* (tr9).

By the time we came to the 16th session I was looking for an ability to examine an issue and make a moral judgement. What is goodness? Could an action be good even if it is not legal? In discussing these questions the adventures of Robin Hood were a suitable topic for prompting the children to think about the reasons for positing a distinction between the good and the legal. Our discussion centred round whether Robin Hood was right in robbing the rich to help the poor. Many children thought that in the circumstances of the day he was right and justified their reasons for thinking so but made the distinction that it would not be right nowadays because we have other ways of helping the poor: *“I think Robin Hood was definitely right because if he didn’t steal, nearly all the poor would be dead”* (tr12); *“It was okay that day ...but I don’t think it would be okay these days”* (tr12). Some were not sure and the ambiguity of the younger child was evident as he tried to reconcile right and wrong:

“I think Robin Hood is kind of right and kind of wrong because stealing is bad but helping is good. So he’s kind of right and kind of wrong” (tr12). At this young age they were content with a two-sided statement; one could be both right and wrong at the same time; there was a tolerance for ambiguity. As they advanced in cognitive maturity these kinds of statements tended to be challenged. Yet, in seeing that the situation is not clear cut, and seeing it as both right and wrong, the child has grasped something of the moral reality which is ambiguous. Lipman (1988) contends that the more skilfully children draw inferences, identify relationships, connect and evaluate, define and question, the richer the totalities of meaning they are able to extract from their experiences.

5.2.3 From Mythic to Romantic Understanding

At age seven to eight the children’s thinking oscillates between magic and realism, or between the mythic and the rational which constitutes the central defining feature of

Romantic Understanding (Egan, 1997, p. 80). According to Egan there is a connection between children's fantasy and mythic thinking. The children move from fantasy to the extremes and limits of reality at age seven and eight and the characters of their fantasy tend to be exotic and removed from their everyday experience. This was very obvious throughout the dialogue sessions in 2nd class. Belief in reincarnation was common; these children were making their First Holy Communion later in the year and belief that one could come back after death in another physical form happily coexisted with Roman Catholic teaching (which rejects reincarnation) in the minds of some children. Many children in discussing what happened when living things died (tr11) thought that one could come back again as human or animal:

"I think if they wanted to they could come down as any animal or human" (tr11).

"I think if humans die they could go up to Heaven and they could look down and they can just come back to life again as a baby and they can just be the same" (tr11).

"I think when you go to Heaven God gives you a choice of every single animal in the whole world and then when the people think up, he makes that animal and after a few years you get born as that animal" (tr11).

Others disagreed and were closer to the thinking of adults in their environment. They reckoned that when adults died they went to Heaven whereas children who died became angels: *"When people die I don't think they turn into animals. I think they go up to Heaven"*; *"When young children die they turn into angels"* (tr11).

The idea of a soul with its separate destiny, distinct from the body was raised:

"I think sometimes when you die you come back as a human and sometimes you come back the same Your soul is what matters and I think your body will rot while your soul moves on" (tr11).

The finality of death would not generally be part of a young child's reality. Most children would not have had experience of the death of a person at close quarters and if they had any it would only have been a pet or a relative who would not have lived with them. Very young children often see the dog as part of the family, therefore a Heaven for humans must also include a place of happiness for dogs: *"I think that when you're a dog you die and go up to Doggie Heaven and then you're allowed do all sorts of stuff. You're allowed have Pedigree Chum and things like that"* (tr11).

For some children belief in magic was entirely acceptable if it fitted in with the subject under discussion. Having listened to a lot of scientific facts put forward by others in the group as to the origins of the universe one child had her own theory as to

how trees came into being: *"I think trees, God chose to make 'em with his own magic"* (tr13). There was an awareness in the group of the real and the imaginary and that sometimes the imaginary is more interesting: *"True stories don't give you much fun in your imagination"* (tr4).

Imagination played a large part in how the children viewed friendship. They were not limited to concrete realities and the child of seven or eight had a wide definition of friendship. A friend did not have to be a person. One could have an animal or even an inanimate object as a friend or one could conjure up an imaginary friend: *"The second best friend that you can ever get is your make-up friend if you have no-one to play with like Seán, the leprechaun"* (tr16). The garden tree was used as a metaphor for friendship: *"The tree out my back is one of my friends because every day when I'm lonely I go out to the tree out the back and I touch it and play with it"* (tr16).

In the same dialogue the child came back again to his image of the tree as a friend and the branches became its hair. It was his friend because *"He lets me cut his hair when it gets long"* (tr16).

This was the last instance of such striking use of metaphor in this group. Metaphor is one of our cognitive grappling tools. It enables us to see the world in multiple perspectives and to engage with it flexibly. Young children's production and grasp of metaphor are commonly superior to that of older children and adults. Egan contends that metaphoric capacity, in some respects, declines as children become older (Egan, 1997, pp. 56-57). In the years that followed I could find no further examples of metaphor but the fascination with extremes and scientific facts, the features of Romantic understanding, featured throughout the study. Boys were inclined to outdo each other in knowledge of facts (tr23) and in the telling of anecdotes with the self as hero (tr27; tr31). Egan suggests that this obsession with knowledge and facts, a feature of what he terms Romantic Understanding, means that "by learning about something exhaustively, one gains the security that the world is in principle knowable" (Egan, 1997, p. 87).

5.2.3 Puzzlement and conjecture in the children's thinking

Aristotle contended that philosophy begins in wonder (*Metaphysics* 986b12), a wonder that seems akin to puzzlement and is associated with a kind of conceptual play. This idea also pervades Matthews' (1984, 1994) thinking and is one I was very much aware

of by the time we got to our 15th dialogue and were discussing the question “If there were no God”. The thinking went from wonder to realism:

“Who would have made the world?”

“No-one could have made the world”.

“It couldn’t have been builded by its own”.

“There must have been someone”.

“A big rock. There must have been a big rock”.

“Well who would make that big rock?”

“Just the universe would make that big rock” (tr15).

Dunne asks whether children can be schooled without losing their sense of wonder or having it stifled. Cultivating children’s wonder, according to Dunne, is how we should see our task in education – especially in the primary school years. Wonder and knowledge are not mutually exclusive but “coexist in the most intimate dialectic” (Dunne, 1998, p. 18). Hypothesising, reflecting on the perplexity of an issue or coming to terms with a problem, became part of our discussions. There were moments of pure reflection in the children’s thinking that might appear primitive to the adult. Matthews contends that “what we take to be primitive, however, may actually be more openly reflective than the adult norm we set as the goal of education” (Matthews, 1984, p. 52).

The children in this study had their own ideas on the origins of the universe and early man’s place on earth, a mixture of religion and fiction with the binary opposites of safety and danger represented by God on the one hand and the devil and dinosaurs on the other. Hypothesising on the origins of evil, one child in 2nd class thought: *“If there was no God there might be an earth because the devil would have made an earth. He’d put dinosaurs and volcanoes on it. He’d make people and put them into misery and give them mean hearts”* (tr15). The devil is no longer mentioned in any of the religious textbooks in the Junior School curriculum, and has been gone for a generation, yet he is part of the oral tradition handed down by older people and grandparents and is seen as the embodiment of evil. God was seen as a protective father figure whose preparation of the world for us was described thus: *“I think God made the dinosaurs. He didn’t like the way the dinosaurs destroyed the world and he wanted them extinct so that the world wouldn’t be too messy when we came along and that we wouldn’t be killed by them. I think that’s why he made them extinct”* (tr15).

I queried if there were no God whether one would bother to do the right thing and got the response: *“You couldn’t do the right thing because you wouldn’t exist. You wouldn’t*

be in it because God made us" (tr15). I wondered if there would be an after-life and got the response: *"There wouldn't be an after-life because we'd never have life in the first place if there was no God"* (tr15). I would have liked to steer the discussion in the direction of how we would live our lives, towards the behavioural aspect, but they did not respond to that. They were more concerned with the alternatives to having no God, our non-existence and the devil having free reign.

At this younger age the children shaped and reshaped the concepts through which they understood their world; conjecture was a recurring feature of their thinking. The word "maybe" was often used in speculation: *"Maybe God was just a little seed and the sun's heat inflated and inflatedand BANG! God was just made"* (tr15). If they did not know something for certain they speculated: *"I wonder how the stars are made. Maybe they're just rocks that the aliens throw out every night off the planet"* (tr5). They imagined that in planning the earth, God would act like any town planner: *"Well I think that God made a huge piece of paper and he planned what he was going to do"* (tr15). Computers featured in Heaven as well and had a part to play in how we came into being: *"I think when you go to Heaven there's some plastic surgeon people and they make the code for you and whatever you pick on the computer. And they sew it up and then they push it out of a slide into whoever is going to make you born"* (tr11).

To make the children aware that what they said mattered I showed the transcripts to them and explained my use of the tape-recorder. The transcript came to be part of the process for them; many of them would read it when I left it hanging on the classroom notice-board with a particularly alert eye for their own contribution. This was not my intention at first but when they met me on the corridor later in the week they would ask if I had done the transcript. As time went by they paid no attention to the tape-recorder and came to see it as part of the session. Urging them to speak out clearly was my constant prompt as deciphering mumbled contributions made the writing up process very tedious. I usually ended the session with five minutes of Cloud Time, which consisted in taking them on a guided visualisation (lying on backs on the floor with eyes closed) to the accompaniment of classical music. This exercise helped in relaxing and bonding the group and brought fitting closure to the session. Three years later in 5th class they would ask me to finish with Cloud Time but by then, time and space were limited. Bigger furniture took up more space and they had grown too big for all to fit lying side by side on the floor in the circle.

5.3 Cognitive style in late childhood/ early adolescence

5.3.1 Development in reasoning skills

After an absence of a year and a half (see 1.3.5) I resumed Thinking Time with this same class. Since they were now more mature I was alert for evidence of greater ability to deduce, infer, define, draw analogies, make balanced judgements and generalise from the particular. The thinking, in the first three sessions after resumption, was generally unfocused but by the time we came to the fourth session in 4th class, egocentrism had gradually given way to active listening and a willingness to modify one's point of view in the light of the reflections of others. This session was concerned with whether it was right to use animals for experiments and empathy with animals played a large part in the children's engagement with the topic. This discussion appealed to the children's sense of moral outrage and I had a sense of the group bonding together. They were prepared to take a stand and the words they used were highly morally charged, *"It's not fair"*, *"It's disgraceful"*, *"It's hurting"*, *"should"*, *"should not"*, *"right to live"*, *"it's cruel"*. They had become sharper at spotting the inconsistency between thinking and behaviour, between what people say and do: *"How can people say they don't like to kill animals and everyday they probably eat ham, turkey or beef or pork and then they come in here and say they disagree with killing animals?"* (tr23). The ability to generalise from the particular and see the issue in context got more acute with increasing cognitive maturity: *"Animals eat other animals like deer in the wild and it's not cruel for them to kill animals. If you were wild you would eat animals too"* (tr23).

Over time one could see patterns in the thinking of individual children in the group. Stewart was inclined to stand back and take a long lens view, taking account of the particulars: *"It kinds of depends when you think about it"*. Barry was alert to naming what was happening when people divided along sexist lines: *"People are getting sexist now. The girls are saying it's the boys' fault and the boys are saying it's the girls'"* (tr25). Spotting any contradiction or ambiguity, he would tell the group: *"You can't be right and wrong really"* (tr25). The ability to name a condition and to define improved with practice: *"Responsibility is taking care of something....if you broke it it's your responsibility"* (tr25). Freedom implied responsibility as Sally pointed out: *"If you want freedom you have to be responsible"* (tr38). This emphasis on responsibility indicated

an advance in moral thinking. The children adopted different stances and I was urging them to defend or justify their point of view.

In the early dialogues it seemed that the children saw their world and that of the adult as separate with the latter having all the power and control but by 5th class this was changing with a consciousness of themselves as active agents. The concept of a future self began to manifest in 5th class (age ten to eleven). A couple of children could empathise with parents' point of view and reasoned that they would act similarly when they became adults or parents: "*The adults don't really think, but they probably got all the rules from their mothers. When you are older you'll probably do the exact same as well*" (tr24). They could now understand the reasoning behind the seeming protectiveness of parents: "*Most of us are going to get married and am we wouldn't like something to happen to our children. We'd be kind of exactly the same. You wouldn't want something to happen to your children*" (tr38). A comment like this seems to confirm Secord and Peevers claim that young adolescents are likely to describe themselves in terms of past and future selves, whereas younger children generally see themselves in terms of the immediate present. The young adolescent now has a stronger sense of personal continuity (Damon & Hart, 1988, p. 47).

In looking here at the transition from middle to late childhood I am drawing attention to what may be regarded as cognitive gains; such gains were evident in verbal competency and moral reasoning but perhaps from a certain point of view some of the changes that take place in this transition could be regarded as losses. Is there not some loss involved when a child's sense of wonder gives way to realism and fascination with facts? The puzzlement and wonder of the early years, up to about age seven, where the belief that the moon could be made of "*mushy cheese*" and aliens occupy other planets and come out on earth at night when everybody is asleep went unchallenged if it sounded plausible (tr5), but it was eventually replaced by the realism of the eleven to twelve year old. This was particularly evident in 5th class when we were discussing John Lennon's poem *Imagine*. Many of the children saw Lennon's ideal world as a utopian dream, out of touch with reality. Most detached from the romance and idealism of a heaven here on earth, without wars or strife, where everybody would be happy in a "brotherhood of man", and felt a pull towards stark reality: "*I don't think people will ever live in peace*" (tr43). Resistance to the class teacher's pleas that it might be still worth imagining an ideal world brought the response: "*There's no such thing as an ideal world. It would only happen in an idea*"; "*This world isn't perfect either*" (tr43).

The existence of heaven was queried: *"You don't know if there is one definitely until you die"* (tr43).

This class had a religion lesson on a daily basis; their class teacher was present in the group, and at the time of this session was preparing them for their Confirmation. The fact that they could speak so freely, expressing doubt as to the existence of Heaven or an afterlife, marked the ease they must have felt in the group. A few pupils observed that different religions caused fights and concluded that the world would be a more peaceful place without religion. There were dissenting voices; the solution for Barry was not in being without religion. He identified the real issue as respecting other people's religion, beginning with the here and now: *"If you just respected other people's religion and things like that then we could live in world peace..."* (tr43). Some others did concede that an ideal world was a worthy aspiration: *"My ideal world would be world peace and no hunger and people getting happy"* (tr43). Lennon's ideal world, with its scant regard for material wealth, provoked much reflection. Kathleen did not think that being without possessions was a good idea. Possessions allowed one to practice gratitude: *"If there were no possessions nobody would be grateful for them"* (tr43). The expression of perplexity as well as certainty marked a turning point in discussion, the awareness of not knowing and attempting to make sense of the unknown: *"I don't really understand everyone living for today. It doesn't make any sense really"* (tr43).

While metaphor had declined as the children got older, they gained in their ability to probe deeper, develop concepts and draw analogies. Analogy entails identifying and pinpointing the resemblance to another context and domain and doing so with some appropriateness and precision. In a discussion on racism, an analogy with the Irish Famine of 1845-50 was drawn, comparing our experience of mass emigration to America and subsequent experience of racism, with the current immigration of asylum seekers to Ireland: *"Racism was against us"* (tr47). Blum (2002) attests to this anti-Irish prejudice in America in the years 1820-60. The Irish were seen as an inferior kind of human being, almost as low on the social scale as blacks. The children were also aware of the racism that some Irish people experienced in England in the post-war years: *"In England they used to have signs on shops 'no dogs, no blacks, no Irish'"* and again on boarding houses *"Irish not welcome"* (tr35). They implied that we should now exercise tolerance and understanding towards immigrants because this happened to us too in the not too distant past. While drawing analogies, linking present with past is valuable in

discussing moral issues, it is worth noting here that it has value beyond the moral. Hence Lipman advises early strengthening of the skill of analogical reasoning for both cognitive and creative development (Lipman, 1988, p. 106).

5.3.2 From pre-conventional to post-conventional thinking

Now I will refer back briefly to earlier modes of thinking in order to spell out development in later thinking. In this study, for the children at age seven to eight, God was predominantly the legislator (tr15). Parents and society made the rules that dictated children's behaviour. Getting caught and fear of punishment were considered sufficient reasons for being obedient. One should take responsibility for wrong-doing because if one did not: *"You'd get found out and you'd get into a big lot of trouble"* (tr17). *"It'll haunt you until you're found out"* (ibid). As we have seen in the second chapter of this study, such fear of getting caught and ensuing punishment would feature as Kohlberg's (1981) first level of moral reasoning, which was succeeded by two other levels. Kohlberg used the terms pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional to describe the developmental levels of moral judgement. Pre-conventional thinking or Level 1, according to Colby & Kohlberg (1987), is the level of most children under age nine:

Level 1 is a perspective from which rules and social expectations are something external to the self; in the Level 2 perspective the self is identified with or has internalized the rules and expectations of others, especially those of authorities; and the Level 3 (postconventional) perspective differentiates the self from the rules and expectations of others and defines moral values in terms of self-chosen principles (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987, p. 16).

By the time the children came to 3rd class at age eight to nine and we were discussing the Heinz dilemma, this conception of obedience, Kohlberg's Level 1, was losing out to considerations of equity, taking account of the particulars of the case. Most thought Heinz should steal the drug to save the life of his dying son (I changed the context slightly from that of Kohlberg, because I figured the children would relate more to a father's love for his child than a man's love for his wife) even though this course of action would put him in conflict with the law: *"I think he should break in. Anyway I know it's wrong but if his son is dying he should. It's illegal but at least the son might not die then"* (tr20). This could be considered as a move towards post-conventional

thinking where rules, external to the self are no longer accepted unquestioningly. Rules and expectations, first encountered as those of others are appropriated as one's own. The givens now become questionable. However, Kohlberg himself considered the post-conventional level is reached only by a minority of adults and usually only after the age of 20-25 (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987, p. 16). Clearly he is stipulating a very sophisticated level of intellectual reasoning and the ability to define moral rules in terms of self-chosen principles; from this perspective he reckoned that "following conscience as against following the law, need not indicate the post-conventional perspective of the rational moral individual" (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987, p. 20). However, it seems to me to be legitimate to regard it as at least a significant move in this direction.

Pre-conventional thinking featured for some children some of the time throughout the study period but most children fell into the category of conventional thinking and in the Heinz dilemma many would break with conventional thinking. In considering and distinguishing the moral and legal points of view they recognised the possibility of conflict between them and consequently a difficulty in integrating them. Following the dictates of conscience could mean bending the rules for the sake of right if necessary and this was most obvious in discussing again the Heinz dilemma in 6th class after a three year interval. Most thought that Heinz had no realistic option but to steal if he were to save a life even if it meant contravening the law. There was an attempt at making distinctions between what was considered to be good and what was actually right: *"It wasn't a good thing to do but it was the right thing to do. Anyone would have done it"* (tr44). Some had changed completely from the position they held three years previously. Clodagh, who previously would not countenance stealing under any circumstances, thought that now *"he should steal because the druggist person shouldn't have charged that much for it"*. Clearly the druggist's greed forces Heinz's action. This time only one boy mentioned the possibility of getting caught as a consideration but he was ambiguous about the right course of action: *"I think he should steal the drug but then I think he shouldn't because what if he gets caught? He'd have to go to jail"* (tr44).

The Heinz dilemma offered many challenges in raising the question of right versus legal, leading many to conclude that the law is not always right. According to Aristotle "the law is defective on account of its generality" and must take account of special cases (NE 1137b24-1138a11). This dilemma led the children into defining what "legal" meant: *"Legal means you don't get punished for it. It doesn't mean it's right or wrong"* (tr32); *"The law isn't always right"* (tr44). There was a certain tolerance of ambiguity

by the child who then tried to reconcile Heinz's position with doing what was right (as already quoted above): *"It wasn't a good thing to do but it was the right thing to do"* (tr44).

Kohlberg argued that children move from one stage of development in moral reasoning to another but cannot be at more than one stage simultaneously. This is a contentious issue. James Rest disagrees with this claim that development proceeds through a stepwise sequence of internally consistent stages, arguing that individuals simultaneously use reasoning of many types (Colby & Kohlberg 1987, p. 15). The evidence garnered in the present study seems to support Rest's position. I was aware of this when we were discussing the issue of lying and whether it was justifiable to lie to save one's own skin. From a Kohlbergian perspective many children reasoned at a pre-conventional level, avoiding trouble or getting caught being the main reason for action. The children at this point were at the end of 5th class, ranging in age from 10 to 11. Telling the truth to avoid trouble rather than for its own sake was evident in several children's contributions: *"Sometimes you just admit it because if you lie you just get in more trouble"* (tr40); but many of these same children argued from a conventional level, the next stage above, in previous and subsequent dialogues. The boy who argued for truth-telling above was more motivated by the avoidance of trouble, which would put him in Kohlberg's pre-conventional category. In an earlier dialogue this same boy displayed a strong consciousness of the injustice of racism and argued for equal treatment on the principle that *"we're all the same inside"* (tr35). Adherence to principle in his argument would indicate a higher level of moral reasoning. In a subsequent dialogue he felt so strongly about the killing of animals that he was prepared to take a principled stand and adopt vegetarianism: *"You don't need to kill creatures to survive....you can eat vegetarian food....I think killing an animal is murder....I'm thinking of becoming a vegetarian"* (tr40). This same boy had a strong sense of his own responsibility for the protection of the environment and was critical of an attitude of indifference to pollution: *"I think we have a responsibility. We all should help bit by bit to save the environment and stop pollution"* (tr42).

Children can benefit greatly from the reflexive perspective in the group; they can learn to decentre and thus come to analyse their own thought processes. Moral reasoning, relating to the rights and wrongs of the immediate case under consideration also involves thinking things through, extrapolating from specific to more general or universal considerations. Quinn contends that children's thinking can not take a great

leap forward without their developing meta-thinking: “They must come to be not just thinkers, but thinkers about their own thinking” (Quinn, 1997, p. 8). That was my working assumption also throughout this research and as much as possible I urged the children to take responsibility for the direction of the discussion and to take on board what other children had already said.

5.3.3 Reflection on one’s own thought processes

Here I will look at some material from our discussions that is germane to this issue of meta-cognition. The community of enquiry could be considered a moral practice in the Aristotelian sense of a structured activity, engagement with which through a process of habituation, leads to the acquisition of certain skills and virtues, cognate with that activity. We cannot reflect on that which we do not already know. In analysing the children’s thinking, I am asking whether they can look self-correctively at their own thought processes within the context of enquiry. This was more in evidence in the later discussions. Reflection on one’s own thought processes and learning to think self-correctively about one’s own thinking marked a development in the thinking of the group at about age twelve. Looking at themselves and how they defined themselves in relation to others in a multi-cultural society involved the children in examining identity and what it is to be Irish. They arrived at different interpretations, being Irish in the way one thinks: *“I don’t think it matters what colour they are. If you’re Irish, you’re Irish in the way you talk and the way you think”* (tr47). In contrast to this, another boy took the legal interpretation – Irish by virtue of birth: *“If a coloured person comes to Ireland they aren’t really proper Irish people unless they’re born here”* (tr47).

In an earlier discussion Liam raised the possibility of latent racism in all of us, resulting in people being mocked for their difference: *“I think everybody is a bit racist because if no one was at all racist they wouldn’t be able to go out and slag people that are black”* (tr35). “Slag” is the children’s slang term for teasing or mocking. There were many attempts at defining racism. For one boy it depended more on actions than on feelings: *“If you don’t like someone that has black skin you’re not racist, but if you slag them you’re racist”* (tr35). This conflicts with Blum’s thesis that it is the content of attitudes and beliefs that makes them racist not whether one has the potential to put one’s beliefs into practice (Blum, 2002, p. 39).

The children were now aware of contradiction or hypocrisy in how they thought and acted: *"It's not right but we all do it"* (tr35). Racism could apply to how we treated Travellers (Ireland's discriminated-against minority, traditionally nomadic). We condemn the Travellers for litter problems and for despoiling their environment but we do the same: *"There are some good Travellers that care whether the place is clean and some people that just throw rubbish but settled people are the same"* (tr37); "settled people" is the term used by Travellers for those who live in houses.

In discussing difference and inclusion, the language used in 6th class was remarkably similar to that of three years previously: *"Treat them the same"*, *"You shouldn't treat them different"*. Their language indicated a greater degree of empathy as the dialogues progressed: *"Racism is terrible because some people go too far"* (tr35). *"There's nothing wrong with black people.....they're just like you"* (tr35). These children were from an all-white mainly middle class background but they were aware of incidents of racism and gave instances of where they heard people shout racist remarks at people whose skin colour was different. For some children, acceptance meant minimising differences, rather than focusing on them: *"I think to jeer black people isn't right because it's not really much in the difference. You're just from a different country and you have a different skin colour"* (tr35). Blum claims that "race thinking" encourages us to invent differences and to focus on them rather than on similarities. It gets in the way of empathy and is the antithesis of the ideal of "the moral unity of humankind" (Blum, 2002, pp. 102-103). These discussions helped the children to examine the stereotypes they used, to deconstruct fixed categories and spot fallacies. Some were unwilling to let go of prejudice against Travellers and were confronted by their peers. For example, Donald's remark *"I said I hate Travellers"*, elicited the response *"How can you hate Travellers if you don't even know them?"* (tr36). The solution, the children pointed out lay in getting to know them and then one would become aware of our common humanity.

In the final dialogue of this study one year later, concerning the deportation of asylum seekers, I became aware that children were not only examining and defining racism and Irish attitudes to difference but mid-way through the discussion they began to reflect on their own thinking and the labels they used to describe or distance themselves from people: *"Everybody has a label. At the end we are all just people"* (tr47).

"If you call someone black it's just as bad as calling them coloured" (tr47).

The political correctness of not calling people "black" or "coloured" was queried:

"I think by not calling them black or coloured is in a way, it's kind of racist, being afraid to say it.....If I was calling someone black that means I'm not afraid to call them black, which means I don't have some racism in my head" (tr47). When Liam contended that we are all a bit racist, Barry agreed but asserted that it was because we cared that we discussed it in the first place: *"If we didn't care at all we wouldn't be really talking about it today"* (tr47).

While some examined their own thinking processes and the labels they used there were others who echoed the views of some adults in the environment towards asylum seekers and refugees: *"I think it's a bad idea to just let them all in because then they wouldn't want to go to other countries like England. They'd just all come to Ireland...if you were letting all the refugees in"* (tr47). This boy modified his thinking later in the dialogue and was prepared to concede that if they worked and were not dependent on welfare and paid taxes they could contribute and we would benefit: *"I think if the government keeps paying for them it would be bad but if they got like a job and a house and they pay taxes, then we'd get a lot of money"* (tr47). This kind of thinking fits in with a widespread view of asylum seekers as spongers and a drain on resources, despite the fact that they are not legally entitled to work unless they have refugee status.

Most disagreed with the Irish District Court judge who, when two refugees appeared before him on charges of theft, advocated banning coloured people from shopping centres if the spate of shop-lifting incidents did not stop (Garner, 2004, p. 157). This story was widely reported in the media and many children could perceive the incongruity in the judge's statements. Brendan was adamant that guilt should not be equated with colour: *"I think it's wrong just because they're coloured to get banned from shops and shopping centres because...It's not like in your colour that you shop-lift.....National people from Ireland shop-lift as well. Just because they're coloured doesn't mean they should be banned"* (tr47).

5.3.4 Letting go of fixed positions: changing stance

My goal from the beginning was to move the discussion to where there was maximum student-student interchange. As a rule, I did not intervene during the discussion, waiting like everybody else for my turn. As a result the children looked at each other while speaking and did not address their comments to me except when they needed to respond to or sometimes refute my contributions. They were willing without any prompting

from me to change stance and let go of entrenched positions. The research of Berkowitz (1982) and Berkowitz & Gibbs (1983) into effective moral discussion concluded that the best contributions were from those who integrated previous speakers' statements into their own framework before making a response and that teachers serve best by facilitating peer discussion rather than directing it. Many times during the discussions children changed their stance on an issue in light of the views of peers as instanced in the discussion on stealing. Con considered one had to steal when under pressure, but later back-tracked, having heard the contrary views of others: *"You really should say 'no'"* (tr28). In a discussion on friendship Brendan changed from his previous position on the issue and decided to prioritise family over friends, having listened to others' contributions: *"After hearing your point I kind of disagree with myself because your family is more important..."* (tr31).

Throughout the discussions the children made frequent references to what they had seen on television or in films as a source of authority. This influence was clearly seen after viewing the video *Young Pavee Voices* (a programme made by RTE television). Children who had earlier expressed intolerant views towards Travellers had a change of heart, having listened to 12-year-old Traveller, Martin Collins who told us his side of the story. Many were inclined to rethink: *"I've changed my opinion since last week"*. *"I think after seeing the video everyone's changed their opinion from last week. I really know this about Donald"*. Donald was willing to concede but still had reservations: *"I have kind of changed my opinion from last week but I'd still like it better if there was no Travellers"* (tr37). Listening to the other side of the story, to a boy their own age, evoked solidarity in some. There was a sense of common ground and a feeling that they were part of us: *"After seeing the video you see how much we have in common. They play football and they support the things we do"* (tr37).

This kind of collaborative discussion led to searching and probing, establishing the truth about some matter. It was a commitment to truth rather than debate which seeks to score over an opponent. Here one may be reminded of Plato in whose dialogues we find Socrates often insisting against the Sophists on the crucial distinction between dialectic as the art of argumentation, committed to the pursuit of truth, and sophistry (or eristic) as skill in gaining victory in an argument, regardless of the truth of one's position or the validity of the reasons adduced in its favour. Consider Brendan's early statement regarding asylum seekers: *"If they're allowed to stay, then too much people will be just coming over here"* (tr47) and later in the same dialogue, having looked more closely at

the context and listened to the views of others, he was prepared to take account of the particulars: *"I think if there's a war on in their country they should be allowed stay. If their baby is born and there's a war and it's unsafe for them to go back, they should stay"* (tr47).

Evy also shifted from her earlier position and was prepared to backtrack but with certain reservations. Although she empathised with the child's position, she was nevertheless against an instrumental attitude to having a child.: *"I kind of disagree with myself.....I think people should be allowed stay but people that just get pregnant for no reason, just to come over to Ireland to have an Irish-born child and just dump it somewhere so then they can stay in Ireland or something, there's something wrong"* (tr47). This has echoes of the mistrust felt by some Irish people towards those who chose to come here to give birth, thereby procuring Irish citizenship for their child. (Since this discussion took place the law has changed and Irish birth no longer automatically confers Irish citizenship)

5.3.5 Scaffolding by more able pupils

The superior ability of some pupils to articulate and reflect was a support or scaffolding for the less able in the group. In all the dialogues the more able children raised the level of discussion and were inclined to bring it back on track when it went off on a tangent. The community of enquiry was in one sense a learning together and an example of the value of shared experience. Vygotsky (1978) argued that children function at a higher intellectual level within collaborative structures. I found evidence for this with increasing exposure to philosophical enquiry. There was a greater ability to tease out an issue and arrive at some sort of conclusion. Consider as an example our discussion of the issue of cheating. Brendan admitted that he had cheated in relation to an art competition because he had not won his prize of two play-station games honestly. He had traced the picture (where the task was to draw) and felt he had not deserved the prize: *"I traced something and I won two play-station games. And I felt guilty but then when I had fun playing it I didn't really care"* (tr30). The children reasoned whether he did in fact do something wrong and pointed this out to him: *"Brendan, those games you won, they're not actually yours if you got it cheating. They're really someone else's"* (tr30). Brendan agreed and admitted to guilt feelings at the time but added that the dye was now cast: *"I felt bad about tracing that picture. I know they're not mine but you get*

over it and I can't take them back now" (tr30). Doubt was cast by another child on whether tracing was actually cheating; he thought it depended on how one defined cheating. He clarified the issue in such a way that he exonerated Brendan from the accusation of wrong-doing: "*Tracing is still drawing. They asked you to draw a picture so technically you didn't cheat at all*" (tr30). Brendan, who earlier felt he had cheated, took comfort from the last argument and was happy to change his mind: "*They are actually mine. They are my property. I did still have to colour it in and tracing is not too easy*" (ibid). Children tend to empathise more with a friend's position and there is the possibility that the friend in this case wanted to bend the truth and exonerate Brendan who was the object of much group condemnation in this instance.

Empathy with those in distress can guide moral judgement and this was frequently observed in the children's thinking and their appeal for understanding of the other's position: "*I think it's wrong to steal because think how the other person would feel if you stole something valuable from them*" (tr28). Making good moral judgements and applying the test of universalizability often marked the thinking of the more able pupils: "*I think he was wrong to steal because if everyone went around stealing things nothing would be good. You couldn't trust anybody*" (tr28). Some children influenced others' thinking in the group, not necessarily by their eloquence in stating a case, but by their moral conviction of the rightness of certain attitudes or actions. In the Traveller debate (tr37) some were confronted with their prejudices and the fallacy of classifying all as culpable because of the actions of a few. Affective bonding (as we have seen in 4.2.2 and 4.2.3) in the group influenced the willingness of some children to take note of the opinions of others as they held one accountable for one's views. Sometimes this accountability forced some to shift stance and examine their own thinking: "*I disagree with myself*" (tr47). It afforded them the opportunity to become clearer on moral concepts. This was obvious in the discussion with the girls on their own, without the boys (tr47). The candour and lack of defensiveness of some girls helped others to be honest and open and reveal their attitudes and innermost thinking without fear of ridicule.

Questioning answers rather than answering questions could be considered a characteristic of philosophical enquiry. Many of the more able children's contributions in the later dialogues took the form of formulating relevant questions and querying assumptions. Lennon's *Imagine*, through its content lent itself to much reflection, as

evidenced in the questions posed by these children: *"You'd want some religion, wouldn't you? And why would you all want to be brothers?"* (tr43)

"In an ideal world you wouldn't have any war but how long would it last? How would it work?" (tr43). This resonates with Lipman's (1988, p. 102) claims that as children grow they move toward increased collaborative competence, logical astuteness and mastery of language and ideas. The superior ability of some children in the group to listen attentively with critical awareness and to summarise and articulate concisely what had been said marked a turning point in many of the discussions. Con, one of the most able pupils and whose contributions I have adverted to several times already was one such example. He showed a deeper understanding of the concept of freedom and seemed to articulate the thinking and apprehensions of his peers in the group. He articulated fears of not being able to become the self of his choice, becoming moulded and cramped by parents to become what they wanted him to be, unable to realise selfhood: *"We're scared that our parents will mould our character because they want to make our decisions for us. So we won't be able to make ourselves into the person we want to be and we'll be the person they want us to be"* (tr38). One may speculate that in this long statement he gave explicit utterance to the increased self-consciousness and increased sense of personal agency of his age-group so that children in the class, though at that point incapable of making that utterance themselves, would nonetheless recognise themselves in it. One could perhaps further speculate and see this as an example of what Vygotsky meant by his famous phrase the Zone of Proximal Development (see 4.2.3). Early adolescence is often marked by a new awareness but also by uncertainty. In the self-reflective awareness, Damon & Hart reminds us that the early adolescent wants control over his or her own thoughts and feelings but recognises also that there are limits to this awareness and control (Damon & Hart, 1988, p. 44).

Those who were strong contributors in the group were not always the ones who were high achievers in other areas. Children with learning difficulties in other areas could be equal in this group. Everyone had an equal right to be an enquirer and express an opinion. They had a voice and others listened, a boost to their sense of self-esteem. Two of the boys and one girl who were receiving learning support in English reading were among the most vocal and articulate in the group. Another who found concentration difficult in other areas and found himself "in trouble" a lot of the time, looked forward eagerly to Thinking Time and never missed an opportunity to speak, sometimes very strongly. On the other hand, two boys who made contributions up to the end of 5th class

were reluctant to contribute anything in the group in 6th class. One of them sometimes felt uncomfortable in the group. In 2nd class when I video-recorded the final session for the year and we finished with a visualisation exercise I noted in my journal that this boy would not close his eyes and drift away on his cloud like the others. He kept his eyes wide open throughout as though he did not trust the process. The other only spoke if he sat beside me in the circle and reacted positively to my encouragement. I was aware that problems at home such as illness, depression and family break-up, contributed from time to time to some children being silent and less open in expressing themselves.

On the other hand early encouragement from home could impact on how confident one was in the group. One boy who was remarkably confident and articulate throughout the whole process had a parent who regularly did visualisation exercises with him to awaken creativity from the time he was very young. Significant adults in the child's life impact greatly on his or her sense of self esteem and self efficacy. Parents, as we have seen in the previous chapter (4.2.3) depending on how they influence interaction and reasoning, greatly affect children's subsequent moral development (Walker & Hennig, 1999). All of this strengthens my conviction that although a community of enquiry such as Thinking Time can indeed be a powerful medium for promoting more adequate moral reasoning on the children's part, nonetheless its impact always remains conditioned by or dependent on the invisible parental influence in the home.

5.4 The role of the teacher in the community of enquiry

In the willingness to acknowledge children's voices, one takes a step towards empowering them (Belenky, 1996; Gilligan, 1982). My aim from the beginning was to encourage every child to develop and articulate his or her own way of looking at things. My input became less as the children themselves took charge. I was mindful of sharing responsibility with the group, modelling dialogue and stimulating thoughtfulness. As far as possible I always tried to put my question in the form of "I wonder if ..." because in this session I did not want it to resemble a question and answer format as is often the case in the classroom. Questioning answers became as important as answering questions and quite often the children themselves posed the questions. To give an example here: in one session we were discussing whether it was right to lie to save one's own skin

when Liam broadened the dimension: *“Can I ask a question? Is it right to lie to save their friend’s skin?”* (tr40).

I welcomed being relieved from the role of being all-knowing and totally in charge and allowed the children a sense of co-responsibility. I saw my role as one of challenging the children to come to terms with complex moral questions in an atmosphere of openness and responsiveness. Bonnet refers to it as “empathetic challenging” which involves sharing with them a sense of wonder and puzzlement (Bonnet, 1994, p. 139). The children, with a certain candour and innocence, would say precisely what they meant. It was important for children to feel they had freedom of speech. This freedom of expression bonded the group and towards the end of our sessions in 6th class one boy expressed it concisely: *“We should be taken seriously because like, if you think about it, this is the only place where people would listen to our views. That right should really occur to most people”* (tr45). This boy’s statement was also an appeal to thoughtfulness, to reflect and consider the voices of children. This is a central message in the National Children’s Strategy (Government of Ireland, 2000), (as we have already seen in 1.2) and educators are becoming more aware of its importance. In *Perspectives on Equality* Shine Thompson draws attention to the fact that childhood has been ignored or marginalised in public discourses in the Republic of Ireland and she admonishes educators to be mindful of creating conditions in which children’s voices can be heard and not to assume that children are incapable of independent thought (Shine Thompson, 2005, p. 182).

Being mindful of children’s capabilities and potential as reflective thinkers, I saw myself as “gad-fly”, to use Socrates’ term, goading them towards reflection and thoughtfulness. As facilitator in the group, I played a guiding role, aware of the need to nudge the discussion away from the particular and the specific in the direction of the general – and sometimes, depending on the context, back to the specific again. Neither the class-teacher nor I had all the answers and did not pretend to know it all. The search for knowledge, through thinking things through collaboratively, was the object. Modelling dialogue was often rewarding because the children would emulate terms and phrases in their own contributions. I sometimes used phrases, unsure of whether they might be understood but often got them back directly in response and in the right context. Lipman contends that children need models of leadership if they themselves are going to be good future leaders. They need models of good adult-child conversation if they are to engage effectively in dialogue (Lipman, 1988, p. 93). Again, let me give an

example. Considering the essence of beauty and how subjective its interpretation can be, I posed the question: *“There’s an old saying ‘Beauty is in the eye of the beholder’.....Is it really a matter of personal opinion?”* This elicited the response: *“I agree with Ms Russell...Beauty is actually in the eye of the beholder. You’d think they’re beautiful if they’re your friend. You wouldn’t think they’re ugly”* (tr27).

As far as possible I queried or reflected rather than giving my opinion but sometimes it was easy to get carried away by the discussion. If children asked directly I would give my opinion. As noted in the previous chapter, no discussion is value-free and all teachers reveal values, but I was mindful of not imposing my own views on the children. This was a forum where one queried values rather than accepting them at face value. An important threshold was crossed when the pupils trusted their class teacher or me sufficiently to risk querying our views. One example of this was when we were discussing the question of how much freedom eleven-year-olds should have. The class teacher, acting as devil’s advocate, suggested that eleven-year-olds should have only limited freedom because they were not capable of taking full responsibility and got the responses: *“I disagree with Ms Lawless.....Most of the time eleven-year-olds are responsible”* (tr38); *“I kind of disagree with Ms Lawless because you can’t really have supervised fun if you’re out with your friends....So I think freedom should be when you’re on your own not with someone else...”* (tr38).

In Thinking Time the children became familiar over time with different forms of argument. I would pose a question *“What is it that makes stealing wrong?”* rather than *“Why is stealing wrong?”* The latter could elicit the response *“Because our parents say it’s wrong”* whereas the former question aims at getting at what essentially is wrong about the action. It is relevant here to recall Habermas’s stress (see 4.2.2) on the importance of the inter-subjective process of argumentation in leading to freedom from undue influence and autonomy in will-formation (Habermas, 1990, p. 71). Sometimes the children would admit that some action was wrong adding *“but everybody does it”*; *“Everyone today is going to say ... it’s not right but everyone does it”* (tr40). My query *“Does that make it right?”* elicited the response *“it depends on the situation”* and I had to probe further: *“Stewart says sometimes it is okay to lie to save your own skin. It depends on the situation. What I want to know Stewart is what situation would make it right?”* (tr40). My hope was that they would see the inconsistency in not following through. Carr & Steutal (1999, p. 245) claim that one has not fully grasped the relevant

moral virtue if one is not committed to pursuing it. Socrates thought likewise. If one's beliefs were authentic one would act accordingly.

To have fruitful discussions I was mindful of eliciting children's interest. It was important to choose trigger material, stories, poems or a controversial news item, that engaged them. Stories can have a moral dimension (as noted in 4.4.2). In our discussions certain stories and sometimes poems elicited more reflective contributions than others. Those that were most successful with this group were the stories of Philip Cam, *Thinking Stories 3*. The children could identify with Joshua and Neal, the two urban protagonists aged around twelve or thirteen in the stories. The heroes or heroines in the stories wrestled with the same concepts of trust, truth, honesty, lying, cheating, retaliation, anger and getting even, as themselves. Good stories where ideas were suitably embedded in terms and examples which children recognised, enabled them to gain insights into their own thinking, to empathise, to examine the rights implicit in a situation and to examine a person's motives and intentions. However, some of my choices were not altogether successful. *Gabriel's Story* by Ann Margaret Sharp did not greatly engage the children and some of the language in it was difficult for them; one boy's boredom with the story prompted him to come up his own suggestion for next session about "*doing something going on in the world, like Afghanistan*" (tr30). The conflict in Afghanistan was making news headlines at the time.

I was aided to a large extent by the class teacher who was committed to the process, preparing the way by reading the story or other relevant material for discussion with the class beforehand. No comment was allowed during the reading as this had to wait until the Thinking Time session. We discussed the choice of topic (preferably in the form of a question) when we were all in the circle and as time went on the children became adept at choosing or suggesting one that would give good scope for deliberation.

5.5 Gender orientation

The debate about whether boys and girls reason from different perspectives has been controversial especially since Kohlberg introduced his stages of justice reasoning. In Kohlberg's test, the Moral Judgement Interview, (which attempts to measure the most advanced level of reasoning of which an individual is capable) girls generally scored lower. Many contend that this is so because the nuances of children's reflections – and

of girls in particular – are not taken account of in Kohlberg's stages (Matthews, 1984; Pritchard, 1996).

In adverting to this debate earlier (see 2.4.1) we have seen that Gilligan (1982) has argued that boys' reasoning tends towards impartialism and girls tend to reason from a predominantly empathic perspective. These terms have come to be seen as characteristic of the two different schools of thought, one being where universal principles predominate and the other where account is taken of the particulars of a situation. Boys, according to Gilligan, focus from a justice perspective and girls from one of care, and there is little consideration for overlap. Gilligan's claim is that girls are more likely to seek an inclusive solution to a moral dilemma.

My overall findings with my study group indicate that even though the girls were generally less assertive and there were fewer of them, they matched the boys in overall moral reasoning. This was more obvious when I took the girls on their own without the boys, towards the end of the study period, and they had less reservations about speaking freely (tr46). Throughout all of my study I found instances of boys as well as girls arguing from impartialist and empathic perspectives and using both interchangeably. This was the case in discussing the Heinz dilemma when the children were in 3rd class at age eight to nine and again in 6th class at age eleven to twelve. Both boys and girls sought inclusive solutions and were equally motivated by considerations of care. While there were a few dissenters in 3rd class about whether Heinz should steal arguing that stealing is wrong, by the time they got to 6th class all were of one mind that human life takes precedence over all other considerations: *"Stealing is wrong but so is letting someone die"* (tr44). Heinz was in a double bind and did not have a realistic option: *"The law isn't always right but if you let someone die that's just not right"* (tr44). Most wanted a satisfactory resolution for all concerned parties. On this issue my data concur with the findings of Flanagan (1991) and Walker (1987). According to them, context is the crucial issue and most people use a mixture of orientations, depending on the context.

The way the children dealt with the deportation issue was a case in point (tr47). In the early stages of the dialogues which dealt with issues of inclusiveness and racism examples of girls arguing from an impartialist perspective abounded. Evy contended that *"If everybody from all the countries...came to Ireland the population would be really large; there'd be no places to build houses...This country would be crowded"* (tr47). Grace agreed, adding *"I think they should be deported because I think soon most*

of the population of Ireland will be like Nigeria or the Czech Republic" (tr47). Those who started out with impartial considerations, concerned with the influx of asylum seekers and arguing for deportation of the two non-national families (one Nigerian and the other Romany from the Czech Republic) in our story, very soon changed their stance when the discussion focused on the baby in his mother's arms (we had an enlarged photograph from *The Irish Times*) and argumentation veered towards empathic considerations: *"I disagree with myself... I think they should be allowed stay"* (tr47). This was true for both boys and girls. A willingness to modify one's point of view in the light of the contributions and reflections of others characterised the thinking of both boys and girls. It was listening with an openness to having one's cherished beliefs challenged and possibly changed.

The girls initially were as critical of Travellers as boys were and did not consider the dire circumstances of their living conditions. They were critical of them for despoiling the environment: *"Travellers should be told to tidy up"* (tr36);

"You wouldn't mind if the Travellers kept it clean...but they don't" (tr36).

This latter speaker changed her stance mid-way and argued that because of the misdemeanours of some, all should not be tarred with the same brush: *"You shouldn't judge Travellers by one Traveller"* (tr36).

There were always children in the group who took account of the particulars and challenged the thinking of the group. Stewart was wont to take a view at odds with the kind of universalism often attributed to Kant: *"You have to consider the case. It's not just everybody has the same reason for staying"* (tr47). One difference between the sexes was that boys frequently sought to back up their statements with scientific facts, often going off track in long details. Brendan regularly quoted statistics or hard facts to back up his statements. He was the realist in the group and had his own ideas on the race issue and its impact on the gene pool:

"Look at England. A while ago they were all white. Now you get a lot of them black or from Pakistan or somewhere like that. It doesn't really matter what you do. Eventually Ireland will be like that" (tr47). A year earlier in 5th class when Cian stated that black people who come in now would not be noticeable in a hundred years from now because *"their son or daughter will have white skin because they will have got used to us"* (tr35), Brendan again retorted with what he took to be the facts: *"Black people don't turn into white people. For example, England, they started off as black people. The black gene is a lot stronger than the white gene"* (tr35).

This preoccupation with a factual basis was a feature of boys' discussion from the beginning. In another typical example, back in the early days of the study in 2nd class, discussing the times of Robin Hood, and outlaws being hanged if they were caught, some boys were fascinated by the gruesome details: *"If somebody didn't know you weren't allowed kill deers or anything then you'd get hanged up and that would be worse than jail because if you get hanged by your head, your head could easily fall off by doing that. Or you could slip out of the rope and then you could easily bang on the floor"* (tr12). This was further elaborated upon: *"People's heads don't fall off when they're hanged. They just strangle... If you want heads to fall off you have to.."* (tr12). If there are gender differences, I'm inclined to think that this is one example. The girls in the class, and I too, hardly had the stomach for the gory details entertained by the boys.

Boys also tended to outdo each other in the telling of anecdotes and I frequently had to intervene. Generally I encouraged them to keep anecdotes short and only tell one if it were directly relevant to the point in question. What was relevant however, was not always clear to them. In one instance in 4th class we were discussing the death penalty and I attempted to intervene when I felt that the dialogue was going in all directions and I did not see any point in all the details of the boys' fantasies. I was stalled by Cian who reminded me: *"We didn't get off the point. I mean we're getting into details of how his mind works"* (tr26). This was a reprimand for me and a reminder that he knew where the discussion was heading whereas I did not. The boys were generally more assertive in stating their opinion and not afraid of a challenge. Later in the same dialogue, another boy backed up my point, aware of the process of argumentation:

"We've got so much off the point like. We started with should he die or not. And it came to pouring a bucket of water on the computer and dress him as a plumber. What do they have in common? So, like, that's completely off the point. Who started that anyway?" (tr26). This is evidence of someone taking charge of the discussion and not leaving it solely to the teacher to point out what was happening. The boys were generally more assertive in such instances. Allowing the children to take responsibility is in keeping with Lipman's (1988) contention that the more skilfully children distinguish, connect and evaluate and question, the richer the totalities of meaning they are able to extract from their experience.

From the age of about ten onwards as the girls got more self-conscious they got noticeably quieter and allowed the boys to dominate (I will deal with this in greater

detail in Chapter Seven). Some were shy at different times. One girl's best effort was to get as far as saying "*I agree with..*" and not give any reasons. She assured me when I spoke to her privately that she was happy in the group but could not speak when her turn came. When the others sometimes singled her out, urging her to contribute, she would get embarrassed and I had to intervene and stress the right to silence. Speakers needed listeners also. Looking at video footage of the group at age eight, and re-reading my journal, I noted that this same little girl could not slide off her chair and wriggle in amongst the others for a place on the floor during Cloud Time but waited on her chair until I would find a space for her. In spite of her reticence, I noticed towards the end of the study period that she was very popular with both male and female classmates.

5.6 Conclusion

This study of the development in children's thinking involved being close to them as a participant and facilitator, observing them move from egocentric thinking to real dialogue in a setting that over time seemed to move them towards openness and responsiveness. The interaction of the group helped all of us to move out of our entrenched positions and take a risk, a step into the unknown. From egocentric beginnings with limited use of the language of reflection in 2nd class the children moved to more complex conceptions, formulating questions and discussing the broader issues of life. Thinking situations through, defining and classifying, following the argument where it led while still keeping the thread was an art learned in the practice. The scaffolding of the more able pupils could be relied on most of the time as they sought to ground the argument. Somewhere beyond the mid-way point in a discussion, having listened and reflected, someone would move beyond the personal and the specific to the general. Not everyone learned the skills of argumentation but most contributed, often in the form of a personal anecdote that connected with personal experience. Frequently those anecdotes needed to be tamed as they dissipated the argument. A noticeable difference in interaction after about the age of ten was the girls' seeming to take a lesser role and allowing the boys to dominate. A discussion with the girls on their own in the later stages of the study revealed a competence to assert themselves and an ability to air their views with confidence. The explanation, as noted earlier (see 4.5.2) seems to lie in

the problems girls encounter in a mixed group in early adolescence (Elkind & Weiner, 1978) rather than any lack of ability to articulate their views.

Gains were evident over the course of this study but perhaps – also some losses. The move from Mythic to Romantic understanding (Egan, 1988) entailed an increase of realism – but at the cost of a diminution of fantasy and the sense of wonder. The gains were reflected in the way the children dealt with an issue with increasing cognitive maturity, mastering the skills of competent interaction, spotting inconsistencies and contradictions, becoming clearer on what the core issue was and what the right course of action should be. My aim was that they would acquire a questioning disposition and take all considerations into account, seeing the comprehensive picture rather than jumping to conclusions.

Interacting on a personal level, agreeing and disagreeing and being challenged to defend one's stance constituted a learning experience in itself, and helped one to reflect critically on one's own views in light of the opinions of others. It was a learning experience for me also in abandoning my role of appearing to be all-knowing and instead sharing responsibility with the participants in the group, allowing them the freedom to challenge me or their class teacher. "If we want children to be responsible when they are adults, we should give them the proportionate responsibilities while they are children" (Lipman, 1988, p. 70). I hope that in this study I provide sufficient evidence to justify the claim that the community of enquiry engendered such responsibility and a spirit of self-correction.

6 NOTIONS OF MORAL RECTITUDE

6.1 Introduction

In the last chapter I examined children's thinking processes, how they form their views and the influence of the interactive process on shaping those views. In this chapter I will extend the discussion, focusing more explicitly on a range of substantive moral issues and moral reflection. I will examine notions of justice or fairness, moral obligation and responsibility, truth telling, theft and friendship, moral judgement, attitudes and values. I shall look at how the children negotiate complex moral issues, coping with ambiguity and disagreement, clarifying their thoughts in the discussion process. This will entail examining how viewpoints on and ways of dealing with different issues evolved with increasing competence with the discussion format and developing cognitive maturity. We shall see how the children were able to mobilise for themselves a moral vocabulary that helped them judge what the best course of action might be in various situations and how they bore out in their discussions Coles' (1997, p. 121) contention that even from the age of eight children are capable of struggling with ethical questions. It is generally agreed in the literature review in the first part of this study that young children's understanding of justice is determined largely by those who occupy positions of authority in their lives such as parents and teachers and sometimes God. In this second part my aim is to show that as the children mature they internalise values and are capable of deciding for themselves what is right and wrong, just and unjust. They go beyond the egocentric approach of the early years, as Piaget (1932) and Kohlberg (1981) maintain, and only around the age of ten does a real understanding and respect for authority generally manifest itself.

In this chapter I will look at children's apprehensions and judgements in relation to core moral concepts, mainly those of rights and duties, freedom and responsibility, and virtue and vice. The discussions range over a broad spectrum of rights from human rights and children's rights to animal rights. Rights imply responsibilities to each other, to the environment and all who share the planet with us. Duty and moral obligation figure largely, judging right and wrong and figuring out what is right when the solution is not obvious. Racism, capital punishment, bullying and peer pressure come up for discussion and concern the children whether by virtue of being controversial at the time or because they impacted on their lives at some stage.

6.2 Notions of fairness

6.2.1 Fairness as equal distribution and fairness as equity

Our first discussion of fairness was in deciding whether the father in the Biblical story of *The Prodigal Son* was fair in his treatment of his two sons, and the general consensus was that he was not because he had favoured one son over the other: “*You have to treat people equally for fairness*” (tr14). At age seven and eight the children commonly defined fairness as equal distribution, understanding it as the sharing of equal quantities, or the giving of equal amounts. Some were unsure and shifted position as they discussed it further, bearing in mind the father’s compassion for his son in distress. They concluded that fairness implied doing the right thing for both his sons: “*I think fairness is doing the right thing for both of them*” (tr14). In the latter part of this discussion, doing the right thing equated more with fair treatment than with the giving of equal amounts. This was fairness as equity, making allowances for particular situations, which became more evident in the children’s viewpoints as they matured and their thinking became more reflective and differentiated.

As we shall see in the following sub-sections, the children offered several meanings for fairness over the course of the study. They ranged from equal treatment of persons without discrimination, equal opportunities for all regardless of colour or race, fair treatment of animals, sharing responsibilities and duties equally and being fair and balanced in one’s judgement of others.

6.2.2 Fairness as equal treatment

Themes dealing with diversity and exclusion were chosen to examine the moral meaning of different kinds of treatment of others. How can we include those who are different? What does inclusion mean? Does skin colour make a difference? Should Travellers be treated differently to other people? Is it fair to deport the family of an Irish citizen? In 2nd class we first discussed inclusiveness of all those who are different or on the margins for whatever reason, and came back to the same themes in 5th class and again in 6th class. The language used in 2nd class was similar in some respects to that used in 6th class. The children argued for equal treatment on the basis of common humanity using empathic reasoning: “*You should treat everyone the same. No one is*

different; just because they act different doesn't mean you should treat them like that" (tr19); *"Even if you've dark skin, you're still the same as everyone else"* (tr19); *"You should treat everyone the same because everyone's a human and everyone has feelings"* (tr19). The emphasis on sameness could imply homogeneity and show insufficient sensitivity of and acknowledgement of difference.

Such sensitivity was evident three years later when the children showed more awareness of difference (at this time there was a big influx of refugees and asylum seekers into Ireland and controversy about the issue in the media). One boy reasoned that if immigration continued at its present rate, in the next ten years *"most of the population of Ireland will be coloured"* (tr47). My follow-up question to this *"Could we live with several different colours in Ireland and still be Irish?"* elicited the immediate response: *"I think we could probably....even if we become coloured it wouldn't be that big a deal"* (tr47). These children would not have much direct experience of contact with non-nationals and their views often reflected the attitudes of adults in their environment. One boy thought the solution lay in getting to know people, thus breaking down barriers: *"If you don't like black people and they irritate you because they seem more foreign, then you should get to know them and make them have a good experience....so they seem more Irish to you if your problem was they seem more foreign to you"*. This was the first time that a child implied that one's prejudices, though acquired from outside may really be one's own problem. Friendship transcends colour if one gets to know people: *"You have friends that might be black and you wouldn't notice a thing if you really get to know them"* (tr35). It is interesting to note that the child who said this was echoing MacIntyre's (2002) view that in coming to terms with prejudice and overcoming intolerance students should be encouraged to share together and engage in common tasks:

Where there are schools informed by the values of some distinctive tradition, Catholic or Protestant or Orthodox, Jewish or Islamic or Hindu, it is of crucial importance that their students participate in activities shared with all those with whom they are least likely to be in sympathy (MacIntyre, 2002, pp. 18-19).

A similar view is put forward by Holmes who, on a study of race relations among young children, found that racial prejudice is a learned concept: young children accept others at face value and only adopt the attitudes and prejudices of others in their environment as they get older. She contends that by teaching children about the

commonalities human beings share, they can learn to appreciate the differences among us (Holmes, 1997, pp. 108-109).

In the final dialogue in the study (tr47) the children examined their own thinking and proneness to stereotyping. It was noticeable that their thinking oscillated between empathy with Travellers and outright condemnation. One boy reminded the group that all human beings shared common anatomical features, regardless of race: *"There's really only one difference between a white person and a black person, their skin colour. Everyone has two feet, ten fingers, a brain, two eyes"* (tr47). Yet this same boy would not show similar consideration towards the Travellers whom he emphatically condemned throughout, partly because of the constant theft of his father's tools, a theft which he attributed to Travellers. Matthews contends that a very young child will not be able to empathise with a victim of racial discrimination because of limited experience and understanding but "in general we may hope to advance along the scale of moral imagination as we grow older and our experience of life becomes broader and deeper" (Matthews, 1994, p. 65). The children in this study were by now, at age twelve, aware of racism in the form of name-calling, avoidance of contact, and a conception in some quarters that people of colour were somehow inferior. While they could be more sympathetic to the plight of refugees with whom they had little direct experience, they were less so towards the Travellers whom they associated with *"rubbish", "trash", "litter", "robbing", "stealing"*, and many seemed to have personal anecdotes to back up their prejudices: *"Some Travellers are bad....most of them are bad....nearly four times a year my dad gets robbed of tools for his business"* (tr36).

On the other hand, others were alert to stereotyping of the Travellers, imputing to their whole community the misdemeanours of some: *"It's like racism because some black people might be good and some black people might be bad, and some white people can be good. And it's like Travellers. Some Travellers can be good"* (tr36). Despite this alertness however, it was still apparent that no child listed a good quality or gave an example of one. Afterwards on reading the transcript I wondered if any of them had ever spoken to a Traveller; no Traveller children had ever attended their school. Barry had a warning for the group on how they make judgements: *"Judging Travellers is still like racism because racism is judging people that are different to you"* (tr36). There was criticism of the implication that Travellers are not normal people: *"You can't say Travellers are different to normal people because they are normal"* and this provoked the response *"If Travellers were normal people we wouldn't be talking about*

them because it wouldn't be such a big issue" (tr36). A degree of sensitivity in the group as to how we referred to people on the margins was apparent. One boy, in referring to the Travellers as "it", provoked immediate indignation because of the dehumanisation that it entailed: *"You called the Traveller 'it'. I'm just saying Travellers are people"* (tr36).

Since many children's views of the Travellers seemed to be negative and based on prejudice I decided to show them a taped version of a television programme *Young Pavee Voices*. In this programme they would be exposed to another point of view, that of Martin Collins, a twelve-year-old Traveller child who guided us round his halting site, explaining the customs and way of life of his people and pointing out the deprivations and lack of basic facilities. Having listened to the Traveller child's point of view, some children realised that equal treatment meant the provision of proper facilities for all. They were clearly moved and empathised with the boy and what he had to endure – the first time that I had seen evidence of such empathy with a Traveller. They began to think that there was no point in condemning people for a dirty environment if they were devoid of proper facilities: *"I think if people put like bins around the halting site and toilets with taps with fresh water, the halting site wouldn't be in a mess"* (tr37). (Halting sites are built by the state with provision for parking of Travellers' caravans.)

With an emergence of political consciousness the children were now becoming critical of the existing social order and questioned its moral underpinnings. The government came in for criticism on the matter *"It is kind of the government's fault for not like providing them with a toilet"* (tr37) and *"The government would think that roads are more important than people's lives"* (tr37). Some were aware of hypocrisy in this regard since what we condemned in the Travellers could be equally attributed to ourselves: *"Some of us do litter as well"* (tr36). The question of where responsibility might lie became a concern and some children saw the unfairness of the treatment meted out to Travellers. Yet, no one commented on how Travellers might *feel* – although the young Traveller women themselves (in the video) commented on how hurtful it was to be turned away from a pub. However, one girl in the class drew attention both to stereotyping and inconsistency in the social attitudes to them, saying that if some Travellers caused a fight in a pub *all* Travellers weren't allowed in the next week whereas settled people have fights all the time and they are allowed in. At the core

of stereotyping, expressed in the unwarranted use of *all*, the fact that there are some whom this generalisation does not fit is enough to expose it as a stereotype.

In this discussion six of the girls declined to make any comment and passed on every round, not feeling in any way disposed to make a contribution. Boys were more taken with the practicalities – how the government could put in portable toilets, the cost of building a sewage system – than with reflection on their plight. John noted in the video that the young Traveller girls, wearing large ear hoops, could afford expensive jewellery when they should be saving for an education and he did not seem to be sympathetic towards them. (In fact, on my reviewing the video footage, they seemed to be wearing only cheap earrings and bangles.)

Some children claimed that if fairness meant equal treatment, the media were biased: *“If black people beat up a white person, it’ll be all in the newspaper, but say a white person fought, it wouldn’t be on the news because they’re in their own country”* (tr35). The class teacher introduced a new element into the discussion – round the question as to whether racism might be motivated by feelings of fear and of being threatened by those who were made the objects of prejudice: *“Should we be afraid of them? Are they a threat to us?”* (tr35). This line of enquiry however was one that the children did not pursue. Perhaps such psychological analysis of motives was not yet within their compass. Despite this disinclination for a psychological examination the children did show evidence of the kind of moral sentiments stressed, for example, by Pritchard. At the core of such sentiments is the conviction that others are entitled to fair treatment, having due regard for their dignity and worthiness of respect. With increasing understanding a child can extend considerations of fairness to victims of injustice and unknown others. Reason alone, Pritchard claims, will not achieve this because without moral sentiment reason will not come down decisively in favour of morality (Pritchard, 1991, p. 246).

6.2.3 Fairness as retributive justice

An advance in thinking in our dialogues was marked when someone not only took note of others’ opinions but shifted position on reflection. Such was the case when we discussed retributive justice which entails making retribution for wrong doing or paying in some way for crimes committed. The children, now in 4th class aged nine to ten, believed in the justice of punishment for evildoing, but not many would go so far as to

support the death penalty. According to Piaget, to study the notion of justice one must analyse children's ideas about punishments. In his view very young children are unable simultaneously to take into account their own view of things and the perspective of someone else. The sense of justice is developed in the child through mutual respect and co-operation among children themselves (Piaget, 1932, p. 196). We discussed the death penalty and whether it was right or wrong in considering the case of the Oklahoma bomber, Timothy McVeigh, who was sentenced to death around this time. There was much coverage of the story in the media and the children were aware of the stark reality of his execution: *"He was staring up at the ceiling executed"* (tr26); *"They've put him down like a puppy"* (tr26). Initially many children thought he should have died because of the enormity of his crime: *"He probably should have died because he shouldn't have killed all those people"*; *"He probably should have died. At least he had a nice death. Those people didn't"* (tr26). Piaget's findings are that young children judge moral situations according to the damage done whereas when they are older they take the intention of the person into account. Moral realism dominated some children's thinking initially, the belief in immanent justice and that punishment should fit the crime (Piaget, 1932, p. 36). In the course of discussion this kind of thinking gave way to other considerations. Life-sentence in jail was considered a more appropriate punishment; the possibility was entertained by several children that the killer might feel shame and remorse.

The group dissected and examined various ideas, looking at ourselves as we hold someone's life in our hands. In spite of a lot of interruptions from outside during the discussion, the boys engaged greatly with the topic but few of the girls contributed much (a more detailed discussion of gender will be given in the next chapter). Some of the children disagreed with the death penalty because that would only add to the death toll. Donald thought McVeigh only meant to blow up the building and he didn't mean to kill all those people: *"It was in a mental moment of his life"* (tr26). He later added that it was *"only 168 people and it's not that much"* (tr26). Some thought McVeigh was ruthless in the manner in which he chose to attack the government. In attacking a government building he showed scant regard for the lives therein: *"Their lives aren't worthless or anything"* (tr26). Others thought he escaped too lightly and that life in prison would have been more painful. It would also have given him the chance to reflect and repent: *"They shouldn't have killed him because....he'd have more time to think about what he'd done in prison. They shouldn't have killed him because that makes*

them murderers" (tr26). Barry changed from his original stance on reflection: *"They're doing the same to him as he done to everyone else"* (tr26). Brendan who earlier thought he deserved to die was now ambiguous: *"It's just like killing another person. He kinda should've died but he kinda shouldn't have died. I can't say really"* (tr26). Who among us can judge? Can one ever be sure who deserves to die? Bill considered that they are *"all wrong"* and asked: *"How do you know he's responsible?"* (tr26). The words *"pain"* and *"guilt"* came up frequently. Kathleen thought *"he deserved to die but it wasn't really fair to kill him"* (tr26).

The dilemma for the children was in deciding whether anyone forfeited the right to life because of their crimes. The age-old question came up in regard to the death penalty. What if you have got the wrong man? What if McVeigh is innocent? One cannot redress the balance after death and there is the voice of conscience to contend with. This was going through Stewart's mind as he reflected: *"I don't know how a person who actually killed him with a needle could kinda live with it.....I couldn't live by killing somebody and then I found out that he shouldn't have died. I couldn't live like that"* (tr26). For anyone who entertains doubts about children's moral sense surely these sentiments from a ten-year old boy display an integrated moral personality and a strong moral conscience and are proof of the commitment and bindingness of morality.

This discussion paved the way for examining further the issue of rights. The children had done some class work on human rights and had some poster displays advocating human rights in the school corridors.

6.3 Rights, duties and responsibilities

6.3.1 Children's rights

I first discussed children's rights with my study group when they were in 5th class (age 10-11). The children were conscious of the discrepancy between adult rights and children's rights. What they saw to be the case was that adults had more rights and some reasoned that this is so because adults are in a position to know what is best: *"You don't have the same rights really because they know what's best for you"* (tr24). Others were critical of the power enjoyed by adults because they sometimes got it wrong; it was the adult's opinion that counted *"even if they're wrong"* (tr24). They used words such as

“unfair” and “control”. There were dissenters who understood the parents’ point of view and implied that children would not be able to handle certain rights: *“I don’t think we should have the same rights as adults because if we’re let do certain things we’d just grow up bad”* (tr24). Barry thought that having an opinion mattered: *“We need an opinion on everything”* (tr24). Would equal rights with adults mean an end to childhood and more responsibility? Caoimhe and Jane thought so: *“If we did have the same rights as adults we wouldn’t be children. We wouldn’t be able to do skipping and stuff like that”* (tr24); *“We wouldn’t be able to play; it would be hard work”* (tr24). This resonates with the views of Purdy (in Matthews, 1994, p. 73) who suggests that equal rights would consign many children to the workplace at an early age where without education they would be condemned to the most menial tasks.

One year later in 6th class we took a more critical view of children’s rights and discussed the articles in the UN Convention on The Rights of the Child. Whilst recognising their need for guidance, care and protection, the Convention stresses the importance of nurturing children’s evolving capacities to take responsibility and so develop into active, participating citizens. Matthews suggests that society is moving slowly in the direction of assigning more rights to children at a younger age. He contends that children should have rights that they do not now enjoy and have them at an earlier age (Matthews, 1994, pp. 79-80). Before the discussion on the issue of rights began I asked the class teacher to get the children to read all articles of the UN Convention in turn and they each had a copy to take home and decide which were most important to them at their present age. In their early contributions the children cited the right to life, to protection in times of war, freedom from sexual abuse, and the right to be protected from dangerous drugs as being important to them. Several children alluded to the right to freedom from sexual abuse: *“If you’re sexually abused you don’t even have a life...the people that have child pornography....they’re sick, evil”* (tr45). I wondered how much they actually knew about child pornography. In a world where children needed to be protected by being aware of the dangers, they understood their parents’ concerns – concerns which they nonetheless saw as exerting a price – the price of trust and openness: *“Your parents worry about you and anything happening. Nowadays when someone asks for directions you can barely even trust them without wondering about being abducted”* (tr45).

As the discussion progressed, Article Twelve, the right to an opinion and to be taken seriously, seemed to have a more immediate impact on their lives at this time. Barry

homed in on the content of the article and was quick to see that this article was a formal statement of his own words a year previously: *"We need an opinion on everything"* (tr24). Many other children concurred adding that adults often do not listen to children. *"Not many adults listen to children and if they have a good idea or an opinion they just think they got it from somewhere else"* (tr45). Here they might be seen as confirming Cohen's claim in his *Equal Rights for Children* that children are assumed to be "weak, passive, mindless and unthinking" while adults are assumed to be "rational, highly motivated and efficient" (Cohen, 1980, p. 45).

Some children pointed out that having rights enshrined in a convention did not mean that everybody would either know about them or respect them. Sally contended that *"even though there's all these rights, a lot of people don't care. A lot of people break them because they're not really concerned"* (tr45). It was important to children at this age, most now twelve, to have a voice and they were beginning to have a greater understanding of the machinery of government and politics and the part that they themselves could play in the scheme of things. Fred argued for the right to vote but Stewart who always weighed the pros and cons disagreed: *"People are saying that they want to be able to vote.....with some children it would be a popularity thing. They'd ask who's the most popular person in the school...and then they'd all vote for that person"* (tr45). Some children noticed that in this, children would not differ greatly from adults who often vote on the basis of the candidate's personality rather than on his or her views. Aisling agreed because *"if children could vote most of them wouldn't really understand anything to do with politics"* (tr45). While agreeing with Aisling on this matter, Brendan nevertheless asserted the right to freedom of speech: *"We should have the freedom to say what we think"* (tr45).

At the end of the discussion some children were aware of the importance of children knowing their rights. Cian, asserting the right to information, suggested that rights should be explained to children so that they then could have an opinion: *"Children in school have a right to know about these rights"* (tr45). Barry concluded that the children in this class would be the only ones in the school who would know about children's rights: *"Children don't know the basic ones...hardly anyone knows about them"* (tr45). This enthusiasm was tempered by a realisation that this might be mere tokenism; after the session when they were putting back the chairs and reorganising the classroom I overheard Stewart's wry comment: *"Fat lot of good.. us going home with*

'rights' under our arms" (a reference to his rolled up copy of the UN Convention on Children's Rights which he carried under his arm to this session).

If knowledge is empowerment many children were conscious of the need to make all children aware of their basic human rights. The National Children's Strategy (Government of Ireland, 2000, p. 30) has the stated aim of giving children "a voice in matters which affect them and to ensure that their views are given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity". It recognises that giving children a voice is society's way of showing that it values and appreciates them; giving children a voice has also a part to play in helping to protect them from abuse. It is also saying that this is important for civic education and for active participation in a healthy democracy.

6.3.2 Animal rights

Moral sensitivity, it might be agreed, includes an awareness of the need to respect the lives of all who share the planet with us, including animals. Accordingly, we discussed when the children were in 4th class the morality of doing experiments on animals, whether for cosmetic or medicinal purposes, and took up the issue of animal rights again at the end of 5th class. It was note-worthy that many of the children in this study echoed exactly what Lipman had to say about American children: that they share a sense of kinship with animals and are horrified at our hunting and slaughtering, our needless experimentation, and other reckless ways in which we have caused damage through carelessness, in some instances causing species to become extinct that could have been preserved (Lipman, 1988, p. 74). The language the children used: "*not fair*", "*disgraceful*", "*ashamed*", "*shouldn't*", reflected their moral outrage: "*I wouldn't buy medicine if it was tested on animals*" (tr23); "*it's not fair because animals could get extinct*" (tr23). In the children's reckoning, animals did not have a voice: "*They don't get a right to say that they don't want it done to them*" (tr23).

Distinctions were made in deciding whether insects or animals that are "*stupid*" counted. Our culture values rational capability but the children did not approve of using "*stupid*" animals for experimentation, according them the same right to life as others. The children empathised in their own way: "*I wish there were other kinds of creatures in this land they could use*" (tr23). They exonerated rats also even if they were vermin because it was in their nature to act as they did: "*That's the way they were made*" (tr23). What categories of beings counted as having rights? In the children's moral

thinking about animals, the fact that they were living was enough: *"They're still living and they're still creatures"* (tr23). Kenneth put himself in the animal's position and spoke for it: *"I'm too smart to die"* (tr23). The language they used was morally charged; the word *"cruel"* was used frequently. Conducting experiments on apes touched them closely because they were our near cousins: *"We're half ape and human. It's not fair to kill apes because we're half apes"* (tr23).

A defence of killing animals in awareness of our need for meat was refuted: *"We could survive without eating meat. When you go to MacDonalds you're getting to kill animals for your own enjoyment"* (tr23). A boy who earlier declared that he would give his life to save an animal: *"I would give my life to save an animal"* (tr23) had qualms of conscience towards the end of the discussion: *"I hate eating meat but at least I'm not cruel. I'm addicted to it"* (tr23). Perhaps what he intended to communicate here was that he hated the killing of the animal but he loved eating the meat.

Some children put animal and human rights on an equal footing: *"I think animals should get treated the exact same as humans"* (tr23). One year later when we were discussing the issue of blood sports, the general thinking was the same, with a pervasive feeling that there was a general lack of empathy with animals: *"A lot of people don't know how animals feel"* (tr41). Some made a distinction between killing for fun and killing for food. Fishing combined both and presented a challenge, which prompted Kenneth to condemn it: *"It's not right to kill fish for fun, killing creatures or anything else"* (tr41). A few children equated killing an animal with murder. Brendan was prepared to go further and to consider making a commitment to refrain from eating animal meat: *"I think killing an animal is murder. It's just the same as killing a human and I'm thinking of becoming a vegetarian"* (tr41). Fiachra argued that we live much longer than lots of other animals and saw no case for shortening further the relatively short life they have.

When it came to killing animals in blood sports such as fox-hunting and greyhound racing, Con raised an important question a couple of times in the discussion. He asked whether our right to have fun was greater than the animal's right to life and whether we were more important (tr41). This point was taken up by Cian who asserted that being smarter did not automatically make us superior. He came back to this point in a later discussion on the environment: *"I'd like to pose a question. Is it really worth killing tons and tons of animals with toxic waste just so we can do something better? Is it really worth it?"* (tr42).

In the community of enquiry the children were struggling to evaluate morally, testing out the boundaries and juggling with issues that border on the moral. It is interesting to note that points raised by the children in this discussion chime with positions taken by the Animal Liberation Movement. In recent years these positions have been strongly articulated in philosophical ethics. Mankind's superiority or 'speciesism' in its privileging of rational consciousness is challenged. Singer argues that there is no unbridgeable gulf between humans and animals but rather an overlap. He decries the notion that autonomous, self-conscious beings are in some way more valuable and more morally significant than other animals that live from moment to moment. Non-human animals endure suffering and pain in our treatment of them for our own ends and our concern for their suffering should not depend on how rational or self-aware they might be (Singer, 1995, p. 182).

Some philosophers, in other respects at odds with Singer, argue that the same exclusive focus on the human capacity for reason also adversely affects how we view people with profound disabilities. On this question of privileging rationality, Kittay, for example, contends that dignity should be accorded on the basis that we are all "some mother's child" and worthy of being loved and cared for. Indeed, it is because of and not in spite of this very fragility and vulnerability that one is deserving of consideration and priority (Kittay, 1999, p. 166).

6.3.3 Freedom and responsibility

In discussing freedom, the children sought to find their own pathway amid the centrifugal forces that pulled them in various directions. As they got older their definitions got more refined and they could digest ideas and reflect on an issue more fully, being challenged to think and re-evaluate. In one of our earlier discussions in 2nd class at age seven and eight one might argue that freedom had not quite crystallised as a concept. The predominant belief was that freedom was about making the right choices, more in line with freedom to do as one ought rather than as one wished: "*We're only free to go where we're allowed. I think we sort of have freedom*" (tr3). Their sense of obedience dictated clear limits. Freedom to do as one wished might not be in one's own best interests: "*Sometimes you get carried away by freedom and once you do that you forget about rules and do whatever you like*" (tr3). Three and a half years later in 5th class, similar sentiments were echoed. Many felt that they had "enough" freedom.

One's freedom was not unlimited and was curtailed by one's obligations, as Sally succinctly expressed it: *"If you want freedom you have to be responsible"* (tr38). Children live in a world of competing values and morals, with family, school and church on the one hand, and peers and the wider environment on the other. With different sets of values and constant pull away from a consistent centre, Taylor (1991, p. 27) asks how an individual can have freedom and not be fragmented. He suggests that salvation lies in recovering "authentic moral contact with ourselves". Lipman (1991) echoes these sentiments and he sees the solution in helping as many people as possible to think as well as possible.

In 5th class some children argued for more freedom from restriction and supervision, being able to do what one wanted without constant adult supervision, freedom to play more and watch television and do less homework: *"Eleven-year-olds should be allowed to watch TV, up late and everything"*; *"You really can't have supervised fun if you're out with your friends....You can't have your mum following you around to see what you're doing"* (tr38). Then there was a deepening understanding of freedom, moving from preoccupation with play at first to freedom to make decisions. Saoirse, one of the more articulate girls, concluded: *"I think freedom is making your own decisions. Our parents have to make our decisions for us....adults do have a lot more freedom because they get to make their own decisions and our decisions as well"* (tr38). The view here seemed to be that self-determination is at the core of autonomy and children's dependence curtails this. There was recognition that adults have power over children but that children do not have much of it. One boy pointed out that parents could take away some of one's freedom if one abused it yet no one could take their freedom away from them. There was the implication of naked power and that freedom and the capacity to be responsible were not necessarily synonymous: *"Adults get themselves drunk and do all stuff like this but there's no one to take their freedom away from them"* (tr38). Liam thought the idea of parents having unlimited freedom was unfounded because their responsibilities bind them. They were not free to do as they pleased: *"I think I get more freedom than my mom would. She can't just sail all over the place going out...she irons clothes and does meals"* (tr38). Cian later refuted this in his assertion that parents had a choice. They could decide to be irresponsible if they so wished: *"Parents have a choice....you don't really have to...you could just be irresponsible and do no work whatsoever, not care what children did"* (tr38).

This discussion allowed for reflection on several key moral issues – freedom, responsibility and obligation. Collaborative reflection led some children to speculate on the psychological motivations of parents and for evaluating their reasons for acting as they do. Aisling had her own ideas on what motivates parents. She reckoned that parents could be strict because their parents were not and they wanted to act differently with their children. Conversely, she held that if parents wanted their children to enjoy more freedom it was because their parents were too strict with them when they were children: *“If your parents are really strict it’s probably because their parents weren’t. If they didn’t have to go to school or anything to learn they’d make their children go to school so that they wouldn’t be like them. If their parents were really strict they’d let their children have more freedom because they wouldn’t want them to have a childhood like they did”* (tr38).

Brendan made a qualification: *“It really depends on how responsible the person you’re talking about is”* (tr38). The restrictions of parents were understood but with reservations. It was understood that many of the rules parents imposed were in the interests of safety. Many agreed that parents could be too protective: *“My Da, he’s too protective. I like him sticking up for us and all but he sticks up for us too much”* (tr38). On the other hand there was a strong sense in the group that too much freedom was not desirable, and that certain parameters were necessary. The tensions here were between protection and empowerment. A few children mentioned not wanting freedom to *“go wild”* or having so much freedom that *“we wouldn’t go to school”* (tr38). There was the very real fear of not being able to handle freedom: *“if you get too much freedom you’re going to get bad”* (tr38). Jane was aware of and inclined to reject limitations to one’s own initiative when one is not allowed to face the negative consequences even if one reckoned one could handle them. She wanted the freedom to watch a movie and risk having nightmares: *“If I’m scared, I’m scared but it doesn’t matter. I’ll have nightmares. I don’t care and they just say ‘no, no, no’”* (tr38).

Half-way through the discussion Evy changed stance, having earlier asserted that children had *“enough”* freedom and now qualified her statement: *“I take back what I said last time. We do need a little bit more freedom but we need our parents to protect us as well.....if people were bullying you and hitting you, do you wish you were with Mum and Dad?”* (tr38). There was a high degree of reflection in this discussion: some children showed an ability to interpret their parents motives, and the effect of parents’ own childhood on them, bringing a kind of psychological explanation to the motives of

their parents and then went on to decide whether this was good for them as children. This same kind of discussion takes place among adults – balancing paternalism and autonomy; protecting children has to be balanced by respecting their need for autonomy. Morgan contends that an overriding concern about safety can limit the possibility of children to experience feelings like failure, sadness and disappointment. His claim is that the growth of feelings of self-efficacy means learning to cope with failure rather than trying to avoid it (Morgan, 2002, p. 117).

The emerging autonomy of the 11-12 year old is threatened by the insistence of parents, in their child's best interests, that he or she think in a certain way and follow a particular course of action. Can children handle freedom? The findings of Ruck, Ambramovitch and Keating (1998, p. 414) suggest that by 12 years of age there are some things such as privacy, to which they are entitled. They make the case that young children are more likely to view their entitlement to certain nurturance and self-determination rights as related to their age whereas older children seem to be aware of the universal nature of various rights. Brendan thought that *"you can't really have supervised fun when you're out with your friends. You don't want your parents to follow you round to see what you're doing"* (tr38). Another boy expressed the fears and need for autonomy that confronted the emerging adolescent, seeking assertion of a new sense of self: *"I think that we want to make more choices than our parents make for us because we're scared that our parents will mould our character because they make our decisions for us. So we won't be able to make ourselves into the person we want to be and we'll be the person they want us to be"* (tr38). This struggle for self-preservation has echoes in Nietzsche: *"The snake that cannot cast his skin perishes. So it is too with those minds which are prevented from changing their views: they cease to be minds"* (Nietzsche in Lavrin, 1971, p. 35).

This kind of reasoning marks a new level of consciousness in the early adolescent. Damon & Hart refer to this phase of early adolescence as the "differentiation phase", characterised by the child trying for psychological independence from parents and a push towards the peer group (Damon & Hart, 1988, p. 311). According to Elkind & Weiner, this phase of formal operational thinking means they are now able to reflect upon and conceptualise their thoughts and thought processes. They can reflect on their own thinking. While very young children live in the here and now, the early adolescent is able not only to understand things as they are now but he or she can reflect on what is happening and see the bigger picture, the narrative unity. My study shows that there is

not just cognitive development but there is heightened moral awareness and a strong moral thrust.

Children, as we can see in this study show a sophisticated understanding of what parents and policy makers are talking about and this great level of reflective awareness calls for recognition. The National Children's Strategy (Government of Ireland, 2000, p.30) recommends that children be given greater freedom and responsibility in relation to decisions about their daily lives as they grow older. In this way they will feel valued and appreciated. This does not mean passing responsibility for decisions and their consequences on to children, but it does imply children having an active part and their views being respected.

6.3.4 Responsibility for the environment

Much work had been done with the children's class teacher regarding care of the environment and the children felt strongly about environmental issues. I chose two poems by Brian Patten, *The River's Story* and *The Newcomer* as the triggers for a discussion on responsibility for the environment. There was a general feeling in the group that people were indifferent and took everything in nature for granted: "*People don't care about the environment until something happens. When something does happen it's going to be too late*" (tr42). They were aware that they have a part to play in causing pollution and in making a collective effort to be responsible: "*We should try to stop pollution because it is kind of our responsibility. People are cutting down trees and that's just wrong. We need good air. We can't live in bad air, breathing it in*" (tr42). The part played by factories in causing emissions that pollute the atmosphere and cause acid rain was discussed. One child's solution was that the factories that caused air pollution should be paid less money as a disincentive: "*They should try and give the plants and factories that do all the pollution less money*" (tr42). Liam suggested that if there were no factories, hospitals would not have vital life-saving machinery. Fred agreed but added that factories did not have to pollute: "*With factories you can fix the air where it's not like harmful*" (tr42).

The responsibility did not lie solely with factories; we played a big part polluting the environment. Several pupils suggested that throwing litter on the ground and dumping waste in rivers was something that could be controlled if people had the will to do so: "*People should stop putting all that litter on the ground, dumping waste and all in*

rivers because we're just making the environment really bad" (tr42). Brendan thought people dump for immediate selfish gain without due concern for the welfare of future generations: *"Some people just dump in stuff because they think it's not going to do anything in their life.....If you dump it it's far away.....It won't bother them but it will bother someone that they're related to a few hundred years later"* (tr42). Barry contended that *"They should have stopped those plastic bags for years"* (tr42). Jane agreed and suggested that getting rid of plastic bags was only the first step (the reference here is to the government tax on plastic bags); we now had to go further and get rid of waste. The children's views resonated with those of Singer who suggests that we should see our responsibility as looking after all living things and not regard it as a God-given right that humans should have dominion over nature, doing what they will with other living things (Singer, 1993, p. 266).

The hypocrisy of politicians was alluded to insofar as election promises were concerned. This discussion took place after an election and posters were to be seen everywhere long after polling day. One child was critical of the aspiring candidates who *"are saying they're going to make the world cleaner....all the posters and leaflets and everything that they used for the election, they'd be using loads more paper than they should. Are they going to recycle them?"* (tr42). Aisling alluded to the fact that concern about jobs was very short sighted because ultimately the future of the whole environment was threatened: *"If they keep polluting no one will be able to live on it anymore"* (tr42). Towards the end of 5th class they had enough political consciousness to realise the value of people power and pressure. Sellafield nuclear plant in Cumbria was seen as the biggest environmental threat to Ireland. One child suggested exerting pressure to have it closed down: *"I think we have to put pressure on them. People should never stop and they'll get so annoyed that they'll just do it"* (tr42). Our trust in the future has lost its innocence when a terrorist attack on the Sellafield plant or even the direction of the wind in the case of release of radiation could end all our lives: *"When that thing explodes we'll all die, everyone in Ireland"; "If the wind blows the wrong way Ireland will never be habitable again because of Sellafield. So like, we will all die"* (tr42).

The thrust of this discussion seems to confirm Damon's contention that the awakening political awareness of the early adolescent makes possible political and civic participation. They have a clearer understanding of linkage and how imperfections in the system can impact on one's life and environment and vice versa. They now know

that one can make choices about whom and what issues to support and become more concerned with contributing to the welfare of others (Damon, 1983, pp. 293-296).

6.3.5 Duty and moral obligation

Children's sense of responsibility in relation to the environment was only one facet of a broader issue that was of interest to me in this study. I also wanted to investigate their more generic understanding of obligation and duty. In discussing this key moral issue many of Cam's (1997) stories proved very helpful. One of these was *Robert's Story*; it concerned a handicapped boy named Robert who attended a special school for the disabled and who was continually bullied on the station platform as he went to and from school. While running away from the bullies he fell and broke his leg. During all this time the station guard, whose duty it was to issue and check tickets, did nothing to intervene. The children questioned whether he had failed in his duty to Robert and whether we all had a duty to help one another. The feeling in the group was that the ticket collector was doing his duty as defined by his employers but he was failing in his duty as a human being. Being a moral agent involved one in complex choices and morality came into view when these choices had to be made. The discussion centred round what the ticket collector actually did, his capacity for action – what he could have done, and what he should have done – his moral obligation. One child put it succinctly: *"He was doing his duty as his job but not his duty as a person"* (tr34). Some thought he had a duty to intervene to stop the bullying: *"He should have helped him whether he gets paid or not"* (tr34). Another thought he could have helped but adding that this was not his duty: *"He should've helped him but it wasn't his duty"* (tr34).

It was suggested that he was not a bodyguard and was just a person who sold tickets and could not risk his position by leaving the ticket desk to run down the platform and stop the bullying. That, according to some, was unacceptable: *"I would risk losing my job if it would help someone"* (tr34). There was a reminder from one child to remember the purpose of life in the first place: *"God gave us life to work together and help one another, so you should work on that"* (tr34). Barry concluded that *"it is kind of the principle"* (tr34). In Robert's case his handicap made him vulnerable and deserving of protection. One was motivated by the rightness of an action. One helped others on principle; one went beyond the call of duty, considering the good of others. This was what helped avoid bystander behaviour. One child asserted that someone had to take a

stand: *"It might never stop if no-one sticks up for him"* (tr34). Hoffman (1976) maintains that there is a link between empathy and altruism and research would suggest that the greater a student's capacity for empathy, the less chance there is of that student becoming a bystander.

How we treat others or mistreat them in the case of bullying was something the children felt strongly about. In the two discussions (tr33 and tr34) which concerned bullying they were able to get into the mind of the bully and could see many forms of bullying, picking on those who were in some way different. Many were aware of the bully's reasons: to assert power, to gain status with friends, jealousy of others, wanting to appear "cool", feeling insecure and weak and needing to assert superiority. Examining the bully's motivations in Adrian Mitchell's poem *Back in the Playground Blues (Poems for Thinking, Fisher, 1997)* the children concluded that bullies were not very smart and that they bullied to assert their power: *"They use their size and strength over other people"*; *"They bully the person who's smarter and smaller and weaker than them"* (tr33). They picked on the weakest where they would have little resistance: *"They always do be real quiet when they're on their own and then they act real tough when they're with their friends"* (tr33). Getting attention was considered one of their motivations: *"Bullies show off; they bully to get attention"*; *"Sometimes they do get fun out of it"*; *"Bullies often bully just to be real cool, but what is coolness?"* (tr33). Bullying on the sports field was no different: *"It kind of puts a dark thing into you"* (tr33). Bullies showed little regard for the feelings of others and thus did not weigh the consequences of their actions. If they could empathise with their victim they might act differently: *"The other person might not know how much it really hurts and if they knew how much it was they might not do it"* (tr33).

The children's insights into the mind of the bully has echoes in MacIntyre's (2002) contention that contempt for the weak and the disabled reflects an inability to face up to the weakness that is in oneself and this inability leads one to bully or act in a way that proves one's superiority. In these discussions, as the children began to weigh up all considerations there seemed to be a deepening awareness of the core of morality – what we ought to do morally, going beyond the call of duty in the conventional sense – and that we live better lives when we are motivated by concern for the welfare of others as well as our own.

6.4 Virtue versus vice

6.4.1 Cheating and lying versus truth-telling

How important is it for me to do what I believe to be right in a particular situation? Many recognise and agree on a particular course of action as being right without feeling strongly obligated to act accordingly. While understanding can guide action it does not necessarily mean there will be a follow through. The children, now in 5th class, were mostly in agreement that cheating was wrong and that one should not judge oneself too harshly if one *“could not do it right”* (tr30); in other words one should make allowances for one’s shortcomings and not expect perfection if that were not within one’s capabilities. All those who spoke were prepared to admit that they had cheated at some time and were unconcerned about it – though some qualified their statements by saying that they did not mind cheating in something that was not considered important. Cheating in exams on the other hand was condemned, and there was a feeling that one would not feel good about oneself: *“I wouldn’t cheat on anything important because if I got into the highest in class in 1st year and I cheated I wouldn’t feel too good”* (tr30); *“If you cheated and got a good grade you wouldn’t feel well inside you”* (tr30). Con adverted to the sharp divide between moral demands and accepted behaviour: *“I think that cheating just isn’t right. It won’t be right in the world ever but everybody does it so we don’t really care that much about it”* (tr30). This was refuted by Brendan who was adamant that on the contrary a lot of people were concerned about cheating. He instanced the case of cheating in sport through drug-taking: *“Everybody’s saying that nobody cares about cheating. Well a lot of people do care.....Whenever humans take drugs a lot of people care”* (tr30).

Many thought that if you tried hard you would achieve and would not have to cheat. The word *“try”* was used frequently by Caoimhe: *“You keep trying....you can always find a way to achieve what you want”* (tr30). Brendan thought that by cheating you would not have learned anything and used the words *“no moral sense whatsoever”* (tr30). This was the first time ever that any one in the group referred to a moral sense.

In their remarks here the children seemed to reflect on the crucial distinction between what is socially acceptable and what is morally right and on the difficulty of adhering to the latter particularly when it conflicts with the former. In terms of one’s own behaviour it is often easy to waive the moral requirement in favour of the socially accepted. This

of course entails a failure to achieve consistency between what one knows to be right and what one actually does. Consistency and inconsistency have been of great concern to writers on moral education. Kohlberg (1984) contended that people are more likely to be consistent in their moral behaviour by the time they reach stage 5 which is the post-conventional or principled stage or the perspective of the rational individual, aware of values and rights prior to social attachments and contracts; at the stages prior to this people find excuses for not doing what they believe to be right. Perhaps in this, Kohlberg's preoccupation with stages may occlude a more adequate explanation. His theory does not adequately explain why many people at lower stages act consistently. Blasi (1983), for example, maintains that the impetus to act one way or another is dependent to some degree on the kind of person one thinks one is and wishes to become. One is more likely to feel compelled to act morally if moral concerns are crucial in one's self-definition.

Towards the end of 5th class the children debated the issue of lying, whether it was ever right to lie and if it were alright to lie in order to save one's own skin. Several children thought that lying was wrong but that everyone lies at some stage: *"I don't think it's right to lie but everyone has their moments and they lie sometimes"* (tr40). Many thought it better not to lie and thus avoid getting into trouble: *"If you lie you just get in more trouble"* (tr40). Others mentioned trust as a factor, losing one's parents' trust and the trust of friends. Some were ambiguous about whether it was right or wrong. It could be right and wrong sometimes: *"It's okay to lie so you don't hurt someone's feelings but it's not if you're going to lie so someone else might get in trouble"* (tr40). It could depend on the particulars of the situation: *"I think it might be okay to lie to save your own skin and sometimes it's not. It varies with the situation"* (tr40). There was ambiguity in the statement: *"It's always wrong to lie but everybody does it. Sometimes it's okay"* (tr40). It was widely accepted in the group that everybody lies: *"It's not right but everybody does it"* (tr40). I posed the question: *"If everybody does it, does that make it right?"* and this elicited the response *"It doesn't make it right or wrong"*.

In response to the class teacher's query as to whether one had something to lose by lying, one boy thought *"we lose something every time we lie to save our own skin. We could lose a tiny bit of pride"* (tr40). Kathleen however dissented and thought that *"some lies are good lies"* and that telling someone that their picture was nice when one did not really think so could be justified in consideration of that person's feelings. Here

the children were grappling with an issue that has vexed and divided moral philosophers. Much of what they said went against Kant's famous rigour in regard to truth telling: that to lie even for a good reason is never justified because to universalise lying for good causes is to negate the meaning of truth telling (in Kohlberg 1981, p. 165). On the other hand it is in tune with Habermas' (1990, p. 53) contention that "under given conditions, it is right or good in the moral sense to lie" and with Matthews' argument that even though it is *prima facie* wrong to tell a lie, other moral claims may override the demand to tell the truth. We develop morally as we get better at thinking our way through such conflicts or apparent conflicts (Matthews, 1994, p. 64). In their view it is part of moral development to begin to face and think one's way through conflicts and apparent conflicts in moral experience.

6.4.2 Stealing versus honesty

For this theme, early in 5th class, we discussed Cam's story *The Knife*. The hero in this story, a boy named Karl, had stolen a boy's knife from the shop. The children discussed whether Karl had done wrong in stealing the knife. My follow-up question was: What makes stealing wrong? All were agreed that stealing was wrong but for various reasons. One child's thinking on the matter was on Kantian lines, the test of universalizability: "*If everyone went around stealing things, nothing would be good. You couldn't trust anybody*" (tr28). Others considered stealing to be wrong because it was a form of cheating; one would not have earned it and one was stealing the fruits of someone else's labour: "*The idea of stealing is that you don't have to work for it*" (tr28). There was a sense that those who contributed more deserved more and in stealing from somebody "*you're taking away their pride*" (tr28). Here, although not explicitly in these terms, what is being argued for is the notion of just deserts; there was a sense that those who contributed more deserved more. A further move was made in the discussion when another child retorted: "*You're not really taking away their pride. You're taking away your own pride*" (tr28). A few other children concurred with this view and pointed out how satisfying it was to save up for what one wanted, and one would not derive the same satisfaction from stealing: "*It wouldn't mean as much to me as it would if I had all the money for it*" (tr28). Jane saved for a year to buy her bunk bed and for her holiday and she thought Karl would have been prouder and happier if he had done the same rather than stealing what he coveted: "*In saving for my bunk bed when I got it I was*

happy.....If you stole it, it wouldn't be yours. It would still be theirs" (tr28). Expanding the discussion, I asked if it would still be wrong to steal someone's idea. Someone alluded to pirating computer programmes. They considered it was wrong to steal an idea on the same principle as stealing goods. Someone had worked for a long time on this idea and had worked out how to use it and it was not for you to steal it, not having contributed to it. Here again you have the understanding of justice as desert.

There are psychological consequences of an act and many children alluded to the effects on one's mind when one falls short of one's ego ideal: *"Your conscience would probably eat your mind. Then you'd get a bit disturbed"* (tr28); *"If you steal all you get is a guilty conscience about the thing which you stole"* (tr28). Many saw stealing as taking the lazy way out: *"You're taking yourself away from the real world"* (tr28). One gets the sense here that one's sense of self, one's integrity, is found through doing the right thing.

One child thought it could not be wrong to steal something as small as a jelly sweet which led us to discuss whether it was the size or the amount of goods taken that made stealing wrong. Some children objected to stealing on principle, describing it as *"wrong"* and *"not right"*, no matter how small the object stolen and regardless of its value to its owner. It would still matter if you stole it even though the owner did not mind. If your friends found out that you stole something they would mind and think less of you.

Peer pressure became an issue. If friends were stealing it would put one under pressure and make resistance difficult. A few of the boys thought one would risk isolation and there was a price to pay for resisting peer pressure: *"It's hard not to because the pressure comes on and they'd call you chicken"* (tr28). You would have no friends and you would be a *"loner"*. The girls seemed more resistant to peer pressure: *"You shouldn't be their friend if you have to steal against your wishes"* (tr28); *"Even if my friends did steal I wouldn't"* (tr28). Jacinta thought that *"you can't buy friendship but you can buy a knife"* (tr28). Con on reflection reckoned you could *"get over"* your friends calling you *"chicken"* but if you stole something you wouldn't be able to get over it. Stewart came to the conclusion that if your friends were putting pressure on you to steal with a threat of isolation for non-compliance, then they were *"putting a price on friendship"* (tr28). Donald, who first raised the issue of being called *"chicken"*, changed his mind mid-way, now deciding that one should not give in to pressure: *"I think it's bad to steal....you wouldn't have a good reputation"* (tr28). Here one can see

the peer group as the crucible in which character is formed. The children reflected on friendships and the influence of peer pressure. They seemed to be aware of this relationship as being potentially positive or negative – the presence of others could influence one either way – but in any case inevitable. One was thrown into relationship and they were aware of the inter-subjective nature of moral experience.

6.4.3 Weighing right and wrong

With regard to the morality of stealing, Kohlberg's classic story, the Heinz dilemma, set complex choices before the children: should Heinz steal the drug to save the life of his dying wife if that is the only course of action open to him? In 3rd class at age eight to nine most thought he should steal because life took precedence over property. There were some dissenters who would not agree with stealing under any circumstances: "*If he did steal it's wrong to steal*" (tr20) and "*I don't think the man should break in because it's illegal*" (tr20). There was a degree of ambivalence on the part of the child who was trying to come to terms with the dilemma: "*The man is sort of doing something wrong and something right*" (tr20). The seriousness of a life-threatening illness could be lost on a young child who might not have experienced the death of a near one and consequently might not have had much of a concept of the finality of death: "*I don't think he should break in. It's (dying) just the cycle of life*" (tr20). Some believed in the triumph of goodness on the part of the judge and that "*if the judge has a heart he probably wouldn't send him to jail*" (tr20). Only at this young age-level did anyone mention an appeal to God for guidance or help: "*I think he should say a prayer to God and see if God will help him*" (tr20).

In 6th class, three and a half years later, all were in agreement that Heinz should steal the drug. Most of the children saw stealing as wrong but in Heinz's circumstances it was a necessary evil: "*It's kinda wrong to steal but in these circumstances your man has to steal....he's got no other option*" (tr44); "*stealing is wrong but so is letting someone die*" (tr44). They did not consider that these circumstances could make it right to steal. In 6th class they were aware that the law was not always right and one had a moral obligation to act even if it meant contravening the law. The legal duty not to steal was outweighed by the moral duty to save life. Now the children could reflect on an issue and name what was really happening: "*Putting a very large price on that drug is like putting a price on life*" (tr44). Others agreed that one could not put a price on life.

If Heinz loved his wife he must try all means to save her life. If he did not love her was he equally obligated? Several children thought that he was: *"I don't think it matters if you love her or not because someone else might love her and it's still a life....that could happen to anyone's wife"* (tr44). Moral relationships between intimates could differ significantly from those between strangers. Did one have an equal responsibility towards a stranger? Should one steal to save the life of a stranger? The children considered that one should because *"no life is more important than another and life is more important than money"* (tr44).

They were now able to make finer distinctions. If Heinz decided not to steal and his wife died, the guilt did not lie solely with Heinz. The druggist shared culpability: *"If he didn't steal and she dies, the druggist would probably be murdering her as well. It's his fault that she couldn't get the drug"* (tr44). Sally empathised with Heinz's dilemma by relating it to her own experience and reflecting on what her father would do in similar circumstances: *"If my mum was dying I don't think my dad would sit there and let her die and not take every opportunity to save her. I think he would save her"* (tr44). Both boys and girls in the group used the language of relationship and care, the language of concern: *"I really couldn't sit there and let someone die"* (tr44). Stewart summed up the debate by observing that the world was obsessed with money now and many were more interested in it than they were in other people. Unlike my previous research group (Russell, 2000) none of them focused on the wife's wishes and what she might want done. Her right to life was not in dispute but nobody in the present study group mentioned her right to die if that might have been her wish in her present condition.

Knowing what is right when there are conflicting forces pulling one in various directions, is a difficult one for children. Ensuring that they become reasonable persons is something that many educational thinkers have for good reason endorsed. Pritchard (1996, p. 72), for example, contends that this is the most effective way of fighting "mindless absolutism and mindless relativism". The following discussion (tr32) took place in 5th class between the above two Heinz dilemmas (tr20 and tr44). How does one know what is right? Does it depend on who thinks it is right? Should one discuss it with adults? In Cam's story *The Fight* Joshua says it doesn't matter what other people think. In intervening in a fight to help his friend he knows that what he did was right. We discussed the question: suppose that everybody disagreed with Joshua, could he still be right? This story exercised the children's moral imagination, helping them to understand what needs to be taken into consideration, Joshua's own perspective and that of others.

Initially the general consensus was that he could be right because he was there and he knew exactly what happened: *"You should stick by what you think but not what everyone else thinks"* (tr32): *"It doesn't matter what other people think. It should be what you think and you should stick with it"* (tr32). Some thought that children should have the right to disagree with adults and follow their own dictates on the matter: *"You have to have belief in yourself"* (tr32). It seems clear that the children here were, at least implicitly if not by name, invoking a concept of autonomy and what comes out in their discussion is the value of autonomy and the tensions and ambiguities associated with it. They concluded that what was lawful did not necessarily correspond with what was right and that it depended on *"what kind of law it is"* because the law was not always right: *"Ages ago when people thought the world was flat, it was against the law to say it wasn't"* (tr32).

Does one then discount the opinions of others and conclude that we have all the answers inside ourselves? Several children thought one could decide for oneself but *"it kind of depends on the question. If it's in this kind of situation you just have to depend on yourself. There could be some questions that you want to settle by yourself"* (tr32); *"If there were loads of people there and they saw it, you would start to wonder if you were right or not but you could still be right"* (tr32). Taylor (1991), even as he emphasised the importance of dialogue, stressed the importance of having contact with one's own inner nature. One must have the capacity to listen to this inner voice, contact with which is often lost through the pressures of outward conformity (p.29). The class teacher queried whether Joshua had exhausted all possibilities and asked: *"Even if I think I'm judging for myself what's right and wrong, that judgement doesn't come from me in isolation.....have I the right to make that decision without looking at every aspect?"* (tr32). Singer (1993) suggests that following one's conscience may not always be the best way of judging the rights and wrongs of a situation. It could indicate an abdication of one's responsibility as a rational agent if one fails to take all relevant factors into account. He suggests that the "internal voice" is more likely to be the product of one's upbringing than a source of genuine ethical insight (p. 295).

While the children showed an awareness of the importance of autonomy and the unavoidable tensions and conflicts associated with it, they were also aware of the need for consultation. On the one hand there was the need to think for oneself and assert independence; at the same time one cannot be so aloof that one does not question oneself. There has to be openness to persuasion, which points to the need for good

dialogue or communicative autonomy as Habermas (1990) conceives it. Discussing it with peers was considered: *"To know what's right you should really discuss it with your peers and people that are the same age"* (tr32). Another expanded on this by making a distinction: *"If you're having a serious argument with your parents, you'd want to discuss it with your own age-group, but if you're in a fight with your friends you'd want to discuss it with your parents"* (tr32). Another child reflected on how difficult it was to decide if he thought it was right and other people thought it was wrong. I posed the question *"Could a society work if everybody were to think for himself about what is right and wrong?"* This elicited the responses from two of the more vocal boys in the group: *"If everybody thought what they wanted to think....most people would end up right. You wouldn't be able to trust people.....everyone would go mad"* (tr32). Is this a rejection of subjectivism? The response from the next boy seemed like an appeal for order in the midst of chaos: *"There's got to be someone that's right and someone that's wrong"* (tr32). The children's concerns here are very close to that of several philosophers, for example, Baier and again Pritchard. Baier (1958), reflecting on why people should be moral, concluded that social chaos would ensue from everyone's following a principle of enlightened self-interest (in Pritchard, 1991, p. 230). Children, according to Pritchard, need to be able to evaluate critically. They are bombarded by and have to cope with conflicting messages and voices, not only those of parents, religious leaders and teachers, but also peers and the world of entertainment (p. 164).

6.5 Conclusion

In the community of enquiry the children were concerned with ethical issues, wondering about the rights and wrongs of a situation, questioning what was fair and right, duty and responsibility, and where the boundaries, if any, were between moral obligation and social convention. They explored the boundaries of acceptable behaviour and the implications of freedom. Throughout the discussions they confronted issues and challenges that face their peers everywhere – acceptance, rejection, pressure, exposure to bullying. The interaction in the community gave them an opportunity to become clearer in understanding moral concepts. Many were forthcoming in expressing moral sentiments – feelings of guilt, indignation at injustice, remorse, and concern for the welfare of others. Pupils who did not seem to show sensitivity towards the plight of others less fortunate such as Travellers or non-nationals experiencing racism or facing

deportation, had their thinking challenged in the group. This sometimes led to better understanding because they were held accountable for their views and had to justify them. Because of what they shared collaboratively the children who readily expressed their views seemed to emerge with a better understanding of the issues involved, of themselves and of others. They seemed, one might say, to develop what Habermas (1990) refers to as communicative autonomy, knowing oneself through interaction with others. This was particularly striking in the frequency with which children openly changed stance in light of reflection with others. What was significant was not only the fact of change but also the reasons for it; it was in the light of persuasive arguments rather than pressure to conform.

My role as facilitator enabled more explicit reflection on motives and actions. Reflection alone is not a sufficient condition for moral action, but it is necessary in arriving at the sort of understanding that motivates moral action. Starting with a story or poem helped to ground the discussion and make its contents recognisable to the participants. Sometimes when the choice of story was poor the pupils did not engage greatly with it. At other times good triggers seemed to strengthen children's capacity and readiness to engage imaginatively in dialogue and to reflect on their own lives as well as those of others. Fictional characters can express dissident views and introduce diversity into the community (Sprod, 2001, p. 200). This was the case with many of Philip Cam's stories in *Thinking Stories 3* (see 4.4.2).

Levels of participation in the group varied greatly. Some children never passed an opportunity to speak while a few scarcely contributed at all. However the latter listened carefully and followed the discussions while resisting all encouragement to speak or justify their point of view; at most they occasionally ventured to agree with another's opinion. Sprod (2001, p. 203) contends that the listener may be participating more fully than the student who speaks more frequently but seldom connects to what others have said.

By the end of the study period the pupils seemed to have a strong moral sense as evidenced by their assertions regarding the dignity of the human being and his or her entitlement to freedom and justice. The group on the whole displayed a strong competence in exploring all sides of an issue – issues of the good life and of justice, and most justified their reasons for holding a particular stance. Matthews (1994, p. 54) conceives moral development as “exchanging a less adequate concept of honesty, courage, justice or obligation for a better one”. From an initial concept of obligation as

an external one, with responsibility lying in the hands of authority figures, mainly parents, I think the children advanced to a concept of obligation that could be considered more of an internal one, being able to decide independently about the rightness or the wrongness of an action. While reward and punishment figured for some children some of the time, there seemed to be recognition among most of the moral appropriateness of some situations and a sense of personal obligation to follow through on the right course of action.

7 INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter I have been concerned with central issues in morality and in particular with the children's developing understandings of right and wrong. In this chapter I will focus on another topic that has been significant in moral theory and has also occupied a central place in children's lives – that of friendships and interpersonal relationships. As is well known, friendship is a major theme in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* where it is considered a kind of virtue, most necessary for living, and to be the bond that holds communities together (NE 1155a3-24). Since friendship is a salient topic for children also I will explore their views about it at different age levels. I will look at what friendship means to children, how they value friends and what criteria they hold of a good friendship. Among the factors explored in this regard will be reciprocity, similarity of interests, trust, empathy and loyalty. As we shall see these factors seem to intensify as children mature, particularly in late childhood and early adolescence. We shall see also that while boys and girls share some common aspirations with regard to friendship they differ in other significant aspects. Their perceptions of friendship and perceptions of each other, and their awareness of these differences, will become clear in the analysis of the dialogues recorded during the course of this study.

Early adolescent friendship is influenced by many factors, including physical development and its psychological consequences on how boys and girls relate to each other. We shall see that a growing awareness of differences and an associated self-consciousness had some impact on the children's participation in the community of enquiry. From age ten onwards the girls became noticeably more reticent and seemed prepared to allow the boys to dominate in the discussions. This finding on reticence in girls corroborates the research findings of Gilligan (1982), Brown & Gilligan (1992), Belinky (1996), and Elkind & Weiner (1978).

7.2 Friendship relationships

7.2.1 Friendship in middle childhood

Friendships are crucial in children's lives, in their developing awareness and in their learning of fundamental moral standards. The most striking setting in which younger

children form and sustain friendships is in their play which often involves observing the rules of the game. Unsurprisingly in this study children, at a younger age, initially defined a friend as someone to play with. In 2nd class, at age seven to eight, being able to play together was important: *"You have to play with them and be with them for a while before you can know what they're like and that's nearly how you can make friends"* (tr9). Confirming research by Corsaro and Holmes, it seemed that any individual who played with one was potentially a friend (Corsaro, 1985; Holmes, 1997). Compliance with the rules of the game in playing together and showing concern for one another was expected. At this younger age too the children seemed to entertain a broad concept of friendship which included not only peers but also pets and characters from their world of fantasy and inanimate objects to which they relate (or at least what adults consider inanimate). A friend could extend from a person to a pet or to an imaginary character or a cartoon from television: *"I don't think a friend has to be a person. It could be a pet or an animal. It can be a person out of a cartoon as well. And it could be an imaginary friend.....it depends to your view how to be your friend"* (tr16). A couple of boys listed the *"football post"*, and the *"coal shed"* as friends (tr16). Some of the children spoke convincingly of imaginary friends being among their best friends: *"I've got my imaginary friend who is one of my best friends.....he was a really good friend....he always looked up to me and he'd never hurt anybody"* (tr16). An imaginary friend could compensate for lack of a real one: *"The second best friend that you can ever get is your make-up friend if you have no one to play with, like Seán the Leprechaun"* (tr16).

Animals counted as friends for some of the children: *"My best friend is my hamsters. They're my favourite friends"* (tr16); *"A friend could be anybody. It could be a hamster. It could be a dog. It could be a cat. It could be a parrot or whatever animal...a friend is something you can play with and that helps you"* (tr16). It need hardly be said that this wider view of friendship is in sharp contrast to that of Aristotle who would not countenance the friendship of animals, particularly those he considered to be tools in the service of man and from whom no return of affection was possible. Perhaps Aristotle would not allow that children are capable of friendship at all for he does after all say that they (children) are incapable of choosing and thus of being moral agents in any real sense. Aristotle saw friendship as a sharing of the good between the good and regarded children as incapable of choosing and thus in the strict sense of being good: "Only the

friendship of those who are good and similar in their goodness is perfect” (NE 1161a26-b15). There has to be mutual affection and caring for each other’s good.

Corsaro (1985) is one of several contemporary theorists whose views are very different to Aristotle. According to him, friendship is a meaningful part of children’s lives, being an expression of their social identity outside familial connections. Even at a young age, while they differ from older children in their imagery of friendship, they are capable of spelling out the conditions of a good friendship. To the child of seven to eight in this study a friend was also someone whom one could trust and who would defend one in times of trouble, particularly if one were threatened by a bully: *“A friend is someone who would help you if you were in trouble with loads of bullies”* (tr16). Another saw the value of a team who would defend one if a group of bullies were *“ganging up on you”* (tr16). In response to my query as to what it was about the person, or the pet or the thing, that made them a good friend, Con aged eight, who was the most articulate in the group summed it up thus: *“If I was to describe a friend I’d describe it like this – a friend that would never break a promise, a friend that I could trust, a friend that would help me and never desert me, a friend that I could share my problems with, a friend that would fight for me”*. Then came the realism as Con realised that no one person could embody all of one’s desires: *“I’d just like to say that no one can be exactly like the friend I describe. So what I normally do is just try and be like a friend and help everybody”* (tr16). There was a striking degree of maturity in being aware at this young age that one needed to possess the qualities of a good friend if one desired them in others. Others reflected the self back to one. There was resonance for Con’s ideas: *“It would be a good friend if there was anyone like that”*; *“You have to be like that to be a friend”* (tr16). Despite Aristotle’s own disinclination to credit children morally, perhaps what these children are saying chimes with his emphasis on the demands of friendship, and his contention that loving is more important than being loved and that true friendship seems to consist more in giving than in receiving affection (NE 1159a-32).

The children thought that friendship relationships implied a set of obligations and expectations such as loyalty and trust: *“I think a good friend would be someone who would help you and come to you when you’re lonely and hurt and would never be rude to you and fight with you”* (tr16). This is also borne out in research findings (Selman, 1990; Holmes, 1997). There were elements of realism in the eight-year-old’s awareness that friendship was not perfect and that sometimes even a friend could be annoying. Even at this age they were aware that not all who professed to be friends had one’s

welfare at heart: *“a good friend is when they do nice things for you and they help you, and a bad friend is when they use you...”* (tr16). Here there is a distinct echo of Aristotle’s censure of friendship based on utility rather than a shared commitment to goodness. One is reminded also of Youniss’s contention that younger children tend to deal with more concrete problems in their friendships like playing and sharing while older children after the age of about nine put more stress on the qualities of friendship such as co-operative reciprocity, equality and mutual understanding (Youniss, 1980, p. 179).

7.2.2 Friendship with increasing cognitive maturity

The change in friendship perception as children got older was a qualitative one. Having a friend who shared similar interests and who thought in a similar manner, sharing similar attitudes, became more important. This became evident in the children’s dialogues from 5th class (age ten to eleven) onwards: *“He would care what you think”* (tr39). Some used well-worn clichés to convey the value of friendship: *“friendship has no price”* and *“friends are priceless”* (tr28). One would take note of a friend’s opinion and be more hurt by their disapproval than that of someone who was only an acquaintance: *“You’d be hurt more by your friends than other people because other people, you don’t know them. You wouldn’t care what their opinion of you is; but your friends, you’re really with them so you would be interested in what their opinion is”* (tr29). One expected friendship to be reciprocated and when it was not one experienced hurt: *“We’ve known our friends for a long time and we like them. You think they like you. Then when they offend you, it hurts”* (tr29). One could feel left out when friends did not include one, particularly if one were originally part of the group. Boys were as eager to express this kind of hurt as girls: *“Last year Liam and someone else had some fun around the common and they would always hang out with each other and talk to each other and I felt really let down”* (tr29). When a friend abandoned one it hurt more because one identified so closely with a friend: *“You’d feel a bit of you is gone”* (tr29). This notion that a friend is part of the extended self has echoes in Aristotle’s notion of the friend as the *alterego* and the wider claim of MacIntyre (1999, p. 116) that our social relations are indispensable to our flourishing and that we need the give and take of affective relationship.

In this study children were aware that certain standards of behaviour were expected of one by one's friends and they frequently cited the consequences for friendship of a violation of these standards: *"You wouldn't have any real friends if you said a racist remark. All your friends, they wouldn't really like you any more"* (tr33). If one's friend were a bully it would be reason enough to abandon the friendship. Likewise one would forfeit some friends if one stole something: *"If your friends found out you stole something, they'd mind"* (tr28). Girls were more adamant that stealing would justify severance of friendship: *"If my friend stole from the shop I wouldn't be their friend any more"* (tr21). Keller & Edelstein contend that being mindful of facing the consequences of one's actions is an important motivational source; when one feels the need to justify one's actions to others one has internalised the evaluations of significant others (Keller & Edelstein, 1993, pp. 314-315). This also accords with MacIntyre's (1999) contention that through friendship one is held accountable and this accountability to others is a major part in becoming a moral self.

Peers could influence one also in a negative way, putting pressure on one to conform against one's better judgement. One boy in the group thought that *"if everybody's doing it and not being friends with you if you don't do it, you really sort of have to"* (tr28). The same boy later changed his mind, having listened to the opinions of others in the discussion and now affirmed: *"Yea, I think stealing is wrong. You really should say 'no'. You have to try and build character to do this"* (tr28). Here was an example of resisting negative peer influence.

In 5th class the children introduced the term *"real friend"* and this was defined as *"someone who respects and cares about you"* (tr39). A real friend as defined by John *"would not tell on you"* (tr39). Caoimhe took this notion further in stressing the keeping of secrets as vital to friendship: *"A real friend is a person who doesn't annoy you or doesn't hate you, knows your secrets and won't tell anyone"* (tr39). Both boys and girls used the words *"trust"*, *"rely on"*, *"listen"*, and *"care"*. Likeability was a deciding factor: *"A real friend is someone you like because that's good enough for me if I like someone"* (tr39).

The reciprocal nature of friendship became more obvious in late childhood. Defending a friend, and being defended in turn, took on new significance. One would defend a friend in a fight because *"he'd probably do it for you"* (tr31). Reciprocity implied that one returned a complement: *"If he helps you in a fight you should help him"* (tr31). Loyalty demanded that one would take action in defence of a friend: *"It would be really*

hard to let your friend get hurt" (tr31). Boys, on the whole, saw loyalty to a friend as a compulsion to intervene on his behalf if the friend was involved in a fight and they used strong language to convey this:

"He wasn't going to stand there and watch him get bashed" (tr31).

"If my friend was getting bashed I'd hop in for him" (ibid).

"A friend sticks up for you" (tr39).

"You should stick up for your friends because they're your real friends" (tr33).

"I wouldn't just stand there laughing at him. I'd give the other fellow a dig" (tr31).

"Nobody's going to stand there and watch their friends being thumped to Hell" (tr31).

It is interesting to note that loyalty was not unqualified but was subordinate to the observations of certain rules of good behaviour. Some of the children would consider the particulars of the situation and make finer distinctions in deciding whether it was right to help a friend in a fight: *"I think he was right to help his friend but his friend was wrong to start the fight"* (tr31). Being friends was not enough to justify one's support. They qualified their statements by saying that they would not defend a friend who was in the wrong: *"I think people that slag black people, like, they get themselves into fights and then want their friends to jump in for them. I wouldn't really jump in if they were calling names"* (tr31).

"It's probably not right to defend your friend if he did the wrong thing" (tr31);

"I think it's right to help your friend but I don't think it's right to get in a fight" (tr31);

"If your friend is a bully I don't think you should be their friend" (tr33).

Barry thought a real friend could not be a bully: *"If he was your real friend he would stop bullying and if he wouldn't you know he's not your real friend"* (tr33).

The difference between a girl's approach to defending a friend and a boy's one was obvious when Sally suggested that one could talk someone out of a fight. She was adamant in her belief in the force of persuasion. Kathleen supported this view which prompted two boys to respond: *"Kathleen, you said you'd defend your friend but you'd not get in the fight. How could you defend your friend and not get in a fight?"* (tr31). Brendan contended that when one was fighting one was too angry to talk: *"Most of the time if you're angry at somebody you wouldn't really talk to them and they wouldn't really get a chance to actually say 'sorry'"* (tr31). The realism of the situation is that people would not listen when they were angry: *"If they're in a fight and angry with each other they'll just fight away"* (tr31). Sally stuck to her point of view and appealed to thoughtfulness and reflection. She believed that this kind of talk could impact on

behaviour and insisted that *“you can actually talk somebody out of a fight if you just ask them why are they really fighting and then they’ll just think about it and then agree with you”* (tr31). Jane’s intervention would be measured. Whether she would intervene or not would depend on the circumstances: *“If he started the fight I wouldn’t”* (tr31). Aisling would not side with a friend who was fighting; neither would she take sides in a dispute so that her relationship with them would stay intact. She reiterates what she said in an earlier dialogue: *“I probably would just stay out of it because I wouldn’t want to hurt their feelings”* (tr22). Talking one’s way out of a fight marked the different approach of the girls. This is in keeping with Krappman’s contention that children in late childhood, while they are concerned with establishing and protecting the self, they also want to be part of the peer network and are concerned with finding good solutions to their differences and difficulties and thus enhancing the friendship (Krappman, 1993, pp. 375-378).

7.2.3 Friends and similarity of interests

Many thought that having something in common was not the major determinant of friendship. Likeability and willingness to reciprocate mattered more. *“You don’t have to like the same stuff to be friends. You just have to agree with someone to be friends because you just like different things”* (tr39). This idea was echoed by several who asserted that one did not have to have the same interests. As they matured in 5th class the children were more willing to take account of and make allowance for difference in taste and opinion. They suggested that conflict could be healthy and if it were worked through it could strengthen relations. Fighting was considered part of friendship and might even enhance it: *“Every friendship has fighting because at the end you’re going to make up and you can be better friends after that”* (tr39); *“All friends get on each other’s nerves sometimes”* (tr39). Good communication between friends could entail confronting what was coming between the parties in the friendship. Jane suggested that *“if you fight with someone and then that’s out of the way, then you’re better friends than you are before you started the fight”* (tr39). Perhaps there is an awareness here of the view argued, for example, by Gordon that a relationship gains strength when two people work through their differences and end up with a solution that meets both their needs (Gordon, 1974, p. 241).

Barry insisted that one could have friendship without having to fight: *"We're good friends and we don't need to fight"* (tr39). Brendan asserted that some friends have absolutely nothing in common, that they just fight. Then, rising as it were to a meta level in this reflection, he detected a kind of contradiction in his statement, and added: *"Well that's something in common. No friendship has nothing in common because you fight. That's something in common"* (tr39). The concept of forgiveness as important in friendship was introduced by the girls: *"A real friend would forgive"* (tr39). Indeed a real friend would not only forgive but would be reliably on one's side: *"A real friend would forgive but then again a real friend wouldn't say something behind your back in the first place"* (tr39). For another child, humour was important; Donald was adamant a friend needed to share laughter as well: *"A friend isn't a friend if they don't laugh at you"* (tr39).

Con disagreed with many of his peers in making the Aristotelian point (NE 115a24-b28) that it is similarity that draws people together: *"We do have to have something in common to be friends"* (tr39). Mick supported this view, adding that *"boys go walking together and they kind of have something in common that way"* (tr39). Maccoby (1990) stresses that the importance of attitudinal and moral similarities, as a determinant of friendship, emerges with increasing cognitive maturity. There is more intimacy and mutual dependability as one gets older. Close friends share personal experiences and inner feelings and they must be able to trust one another and rely on each other in times of need. In 5th class there seemed to be an increased realisation of the obligations and expectations of friendship and a greater interiorisation of what the desired reciprocity consists in: *"someone that you could trust and rely on, someone that would listen to you"* (tr39); they were also aware that to have a good friend one must be a worthy friend oneself. Donald condemned bullies for having nothing to offer beyond a show of physical strength and suggested that friendship implied something more: *"Bullies are kind of weak....using their physical appearance to get friends. That's real inside. If you want to get friends you'll have to get strong inside"* (tr33). This notion of *"strong inside"*, implying an inner strength, showed a greater awareness on the children's part of the psychological dimension of friendship and of the fact that what defines the moral agent is a disposition to pursue the good of others as well one's own (See Carr & Steutal, 1999, p. 246).

At this stage both boys and girls despised utilitarian friendships seeing them as false with someone pretending to be a friend but in reality using one for their own selfish

reasons. When someone accused others in the group of being friendly with Bill because of his big house this was sharply refuted by Cian who insisted *"I'm not seeing him because he has stuff"* (tr39). Another made the interesting distinction that *"if you have a big house it is enough to attract friends but it won't keep friends"* (tr39). A false friend could be attracted to one's possessions such as play stations and not be really interested in friendship: *"My friend was just using me for my play station. When he came over to my house he robbed my football"* (tr29). Another asserted that they *"don't really talk. They'd be just there playing"* (tr39). Both boys and girls expressed feelings of being hurt at being used by a friend: *"I think when your friends use you, they're not really your friends and you'd be hurt that they're using you for something which you have"* (tr29). The genuineness of the friendship between the male protagonists, Joshua and Neil, in Cam's story *Winged* was queried, the implication being that one could be deluding oneself about one's friend: *"I'm going to question. Were they best friends? They might have been fooling themselves to think they were best friends. They mightn't actually be best friends"* (tr39). In analysing the children's views one is again reminded of Aristotle's contention that it is between good men that both love and friendship are found in the highest form. Only the friendship of those who are good and similar in their goodness is perfect (NE 1162b10-35). Utilitarian friendships lack this goodness and are therefore doomed.

Both boys and girls accorded family precedence over friends: *"Blood is thicker than water. Your family means a lot more than your friends. You love your family"* (tr31). Cousins formed part of the family circle and for some children the family bond could trump friendship: *"Your cousin is part of your family and you might know him for the rest of your life"* (tr31). Towards the end of a discussion on friendship Brendan had a change of heart and agreed with the others on the importance of family: *"After hearing your point I kind of disagree with myself because your family is more important....Your friend is just like a person but your cousin is your family"* (tr31). Interestingly, the word "love" was not used in the context of friendship, being reserved for family members.

7.3 Boys' and girls' friendships

7.3.1 Boys' perception of friendship

While boys and girls shared common aspirations of friendship in the form of mutuality and dependability as they got older, in late childhood and early adolescence they were aware of similarities and differences in how they expressed their friendship. At a younger age the children did not advert to secrets or rather, the relevance of secrets did not emerge in their discussions. However, in 5th class at age ten to eleven, it was clear that girls shared secrets but boys asserted that they did not: *"Sometimes boys have different kinds of friendship because Caoimhe said a best friend is someone that you can tell secrets to. Well like we don't really tell secrets to each other. We just jump on each other and mess with each other"* (tr39). This sharing of secrets and keeping of promises was more important for girls than for boys in this study. John claimed that his circle of friends did not disclose secrets: *"Girls tell secrets to each other. Like me, Barry and Liam, we didn't tell secrets mostly to each other"* (tr39). Cian added that *"boys talk about what stuff they have"* (tr39). I find it noteworthy that while VanManen and Levering (1996, p. 8), in their important study *Childhood Secrets: Intimacy, Privacy, and the Self reconsidered*, contend that secrets have pedagogical significance in so far as they contribute to the formation of personal identity, they make no reference to the different ways in which boys and girls view secrets. Evidence gathered in my study however points to significant gender differences on this matter and seems to indicate, at the very least, a need for further, more focused research on the topic.

Liam saw the contrast between the ways in which fighting is conducted: boys physically wading in with fists flailing while the girls were more concerned with appearances and with talking their way through it: *"When a boy gets into a fight it gets all serious. Then we get into a big scrap and bash each other, but when a girl gets into a fight it gets all mouth and looking better"* (tr39). What the children say resonates with the research findings of Ruble & Martin (1998), indicating that in early adolescence, girls' groups are more cooperative while boys' groups are more combative and rough with more attempts at attaining dominance and with more constrictive interaction styles. Girls' groups on the other hand are marked by cooperative attitudes and enabling interaction styles (Ruble & Martin, 1998, p. 961).

The boys in this study were not inclined to be quite as positive in their estimation of girls' behaviour as Ruble & Martin. Liam, for example, suggested that girls bully and "*not say they do*" (tr33). Brendan reckoned that bullying was more emotional for girls but boys could get over it because theirs was a physical hurt: "*I think girls' bullying can be more emotional for girls. The boys, they might get hurt but they'll get over that*" (tr33).

One should conclude, however, that predilection on the part of boys for more physical expression precludes real emotional experience on their part. Stewart, for example, claimed: "*You can get over it if you're strong like boys, but like girls are saying stuff to you that maybe hurt your feelings*" (tr33). Barry went further and in a quite open and candid way remarked on the unfairness of not being offered sympathy when one's feelings were hurt. One was not allowed to cry. If one were physically hurt people would look after one: "*When you get hurt by someone physically and you cry, people would really look after you and come over to you. But then, mentally, if they hurt your feelings and you cry, most people will just laugh at you, but I don't get it why they do that*" (tr33). This same boy thought that girls could be more hurt by painful comments: "*You can get really hurt when you're a girl. Comments can hurt you more*" (tr33). These comments showed that boys could decentre too and see what was going on for girls.

Research findings, for example, Elkind & Weiner (1978) point to a lowering of self esteem in girls from age 10 onwards while boys' self-esteem does not seem to suffer in the same way. That did not stop the boys from appreciating the greater vulnerability of girls. In the present study the evidence on this matter is somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, at a time when his peers were gaining rapidly in height in 5th class, Stewart could say that he did not find his low stature a disadvantage and was comfortable with himself: "*I'm the smallest in this class but I don't care. I wouldn't mind if I was big or small. I'm okay*" (tr29). On the other hand, Fiachra's experience was not quite so positive as his low stature caused him grief: "*People slag me for my height. My little brother, he's only eight and he's not much smaller than me. He's big for his age and he's strong and no one slags him*" (tr29). This candidness and honesty emerged in the later discussions; boys were prepared to express vulnerability, a trait attributed generally to girls.

7.3.2 Girls' perception of boys' and girls' interaction

In 2nd class at age seven and eight there was no noticeable difference in the participation of boys and girls in the group but from 4th class onwards, at about age ten, it became noticeable that girls became less comfortable about expressing an opinion in a mixed group. Boys were more at ease and less hesitant in articulating their views, whereas many of the girls, whom I knew to be more articulate than many of the outspoken boys, were becoming more reticent and content to let the boys dominate the discussions. They seemed to be more aware of being constricted by both boys and other girls and seemed to become more cautious in their approach. In the light of accumulating evidence I decided to probe this issue of relative withdrawal by the older girls. To do so I decided to hold a session with the girls on their own towards the end of the study period when most of them were now twelve, providing them with an opportunity to speak freely in a single-sex group. This decision provoked loud protestations and accusations of discrimination from the boys who saw themselves being excluded from the discussion. Of the fourteen girls in the class only ten were present and there was an air of intimacy in this smaller group. These girls were now at the end of primary school and about to enter secondary school.

The topic for discussion was whether girls were better off in single-sex schools for their secondary education. Rather than confront them with their reticence in discussion I decided to approach the matter obliquely and opened the discussion with *"Are girls better off in single sex schools for their secondary education. An American psychologist, Carol Gilligan, says that girls lose their voices and become fearful of expressing an opinion in case they appear foolish....not only in front of boys but also in the presence of girls. What do you think?"* Many of them agreed that since boys would distract them from their studies they would concentrate more on their studies and have a better education in single sex schools: *"If you fancy a boy you'd try to look good in front of him....you'd concentrate on them more than anything. Your education would go down a bit because you wouldn't be listening to what the teacher would be saying. You'd be listening to that boy"* (tr46). My contributions took a questioning form in this discussion. I asked whether boys inhibited them in the group. Some agreed that this was the case: *"In our class it is kind of embarrassing to talk. You'd probably talk more in an all-girls school"* (tr46). There was a feeling in the group that boys' mocking was intimidating: *"When you're expressing your opinion in our class they think you're stupid and you get laughed at by boys and you get all embarrassed and it stops you"*

from talking at all" (tr46). Confidence was an issue but Caoimhe saw the value of having discussions in a group like this and suggested that one might have more confidence in expressing one's opinion in a mixed school afterwards: "*I think that after you finish a conversation with someone like this when speaking out, you might have a bit more confidence to express your opinion in a mixed school afterwards*" (tr46). I think the girls appreciated and valued this kind of forum where they could express themselves and evaluate what was happening in their friendship relationships.

Some of the girls thought that boys were mean to girls and bullied them but they interpreted this as boys' attempt to enhance their standing *vis-à-vis* their peers: "*Half the reason why boys bully girls is because some other boys might think that they're brave...they feel they'd have to bully to stay in their group*" (tr46). Saoirse thought that boys had a reputation to keep up: "*Most likely you're going to get bullied by boys because it's like in their nature.....they'd have to keep up their reputation with the other boys*" (tr46). At this age they were very self-conscious about their appearance especially in the eyes of boys. One would "*be slagged by boys...over your fatness or your skinniness*" (tr46). It is noteworthy however, that the girls did not simply comment on boys and close ranks. They were critical of themselves and how they related to each other. Caoimhe, who had already opted for a single sex secondary school so that she would not be teased, attributed this mocking and teasing to age and lack of maturity and suggested that it was not just boys who were the culprits but that girls did it as well: "*I don't think it's a real difference*" (tr46). She thought boys were not afraid of saying what they thought but "*girls, they're more quiet. They just say it to their friends*" (tr46). Some girls thought that bullying goes on between girls but in a different way: "*In a girls' school there's more bitchiness and fighting*" (tr46); "*the boys wouldn't bully you as much as the girls*" (tr46).

Emotional hurt could be more painful and many girls were aware of this, in some respects echoing comments by boys (encountered in the previous section): "*Girls don't physically beat youbut you're hurt because your feelings hurt more*" (tr46); "*girls are more cruel mentally than physically because I think they prefer to hurt people's feelings than actually hurt them*" (tr46). A lot of self-criticism was expressed in a very undefended way. There was a sense that girls held on to grievances and took longer to repair the relationship in contrast to boys who restored friendship easily: "*If girls did fight they wouldn't talk for a few weeks...but boys, they'd have a fight one day and they'd probably be friends the next*" (tr46)

There was general agreement that boys interacted differently to girls. They had a different way of expressing themselves: *"Boys don't talk in their group.....they express what they feel in a fight but.....girls are just talking among themselves. They'd call names behind your back and that's the difference between boys and girls"* (tr46). Girls would "slag" you but *"boys push you around"*. Girls were fearful of starting a fight for fear of getting into trouble but *"boys couldn't care less. They just kill each other"* (tr46). The word "kill" was often used by them to denote very rough play. They alluded to the bravado of the boys in boasting of being the anti-hero, the one who got into trouble and was not afraid, but Saoirse was not impressed: *"I heard a few boys talking...and they were saying 'I think I'm the boldest because I've got into trouble this many times and I got sent to Mr. X's (the Principal) office...They're just stupid"* (tr46).

Some girls thought that in a mixed school there was pressure on the girls to wear make-up to impress the boys but this was refuted by others. One did this for oneself, not for others: *"I put on make-up. It isn't to impress the boys. It's just to look nice...You're not going to be liked because you have make-up on. I think that's stupid judging people by what they look like"* (tr46). Others thought that when one enhanced one's appearance one felt more confident: *"Girls put on make-up to give themselves more confidence as well"* (tr46). Jacinta thought that some girls wore make-up and drank and smoked to look "cool" and attract boys: *"Some girls start drinking and smoking and looking gorgeous all around boys.....If they do homework they'll slag them and they wouldn't go out with them. But if you look gorgeous and drink and smoke they would"* (tr46). Evy agreed that girls behaved in a certain way to attract boys: *"I saw these girls and they had make-up on and they saw these boys and they were pulling up their skirts.....and the boys started walking over to them....If they had been normal people the boys wouldn't have come over to them"* (tr46). She put herself in a vulnerable position in asserting that boys in this class liked girls with physical attributes which she was conscious of lacking: *"They like boobies and I'm straight. Everyone slags me because of that"* (tr46). Cultural conditioning has made for close relationship between girls' appearance and their self-concepts. Elkind & Weiner (1978, p. 633) claim that in a society where a woman is valued by her looks, appearance plays a large part in a woman's self-conception.

I asked them if they would be afraid of saying what they really thought and felt with other girls. Sally would not say what she really thought if there were boys in the company *"in case they'd call me 'stupid'"* implying that she would if there were girls

present (tr46). She thought a lot of people around here wanted to impress the boys by smoking and she thought that was horrible and asked: *"Would you start smoking and drinking just for one boy?"* (tr46). Caoimhe's response to this question reflected a growing self-assuredness and an ease and candour that was obvious towards the end of the discussion: *"No, I wouldn't. If I wanted to I would. I wouldn't just do it for a boy. If they didn't like me the way I am, I just wouldn't be with them"* (tr46). These girls did not want to resort to duplicity and there was a sense that it was harder for girls to be authentic. This strong conception of self and sense of self-respect was also reflected by Saoirse who reinforced Caoimhe's view: *"Girls who do all that stuff for boys....they don't care about themselves. They care more about other people than they do about themselves"* (tr46). These girls were aware of the different ways of being, aware of the tensions inherent in the situations in which they found themselves. There was pressure to conform and yet there were lone voices among them that were resistant to following the herd. There was a sense that boys use girls and have little interest in authentic girls: *"I don't think you should smoke or drink for a fella because if he's just going after your looks and all...he'll just dump you and go with someone else who's nicer looking because he's not going for your intelligence"* (tr46).

7.3.3 The risk of being authentic

Evy would go along with the herd sometimes and say that she liked something that was popular with the rest of the group rather than risk being different: *"they'd think I'm weird because I didn't like it"* (tr46). Then being aware of what she was saying she back-tracked and heard the parental voice of warning: *"Yea, my mom told me to say what I think instead of other people leading you. Just do your own thing"* (tr46). Jane's mother had given her similar advice which she seemed glad to echo here in this group. If everybody else said one thing it did not mean that she had to agree: *"I have to say what I think"* (tr46). The risk of losing relationship and appearing foolish was echoed by Jacinta: *"Sometimes I'm afraid to express my opinion....doing a picture in class or drawing, they start slagging you, 'you're stupid, can't draw' and you're afraid to ask them how to make a different picture because they might actually slag you over it"* (tr46). This period of early adolescence, the crossroads between girlhood and womanhood is, according to Brown and Gilligan, a crisis in young girls' lives, often marked by disconnection and a loss of voice (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 6). Once they

remove themselves from relationship they can have difficulty in articulating their feelings, but they yearn for authenticity in a relationship and want real friends, ones who will understand and accept them as they are.

Brown & Gilligan contend that for girls in early adolescence to risk saying what they are really feeling and thinking could mean losing their relationships and finding themselves isolated (p. 217). I asked if it were a big risk in our group to say what one really thought because of what could happen to one. Caoimhe did not think it was a big risk but admitted that she felt more comfortable among girls. For Jane it depended on the girls and how close she was to them: *"If you're really good friends, well it's not a risk to take, but if they're not they'll go off and say things about you"* (tr46). Saoirse expressed a certain wariness; girls even those one trusted behaved differently towards each other when there were boys present: *"I'm not afraid to express my opinion here because there's no girls who'd go off and slag you, but like, in front of boys they would, and I'd say that most girls, depending on the girls that they're with, they'll slag you"* (tr46). Then seeking reassurance of being understood by me, she asked: *"Does that make sense to you?"* She had not previously asked this but this time it must have mattered to her. Brown & Gilligan in their study of pre-adolescent girls concluded that it was essential that there was opportunity to think and feel with other women. They suggest that we need to be able to appreciate the relational impasse that these young girls experience, and call for a new understanding of women's psychological development (Brown & Gilligan, 1993, p. 225).

I queried how they could know whether their friends really valued them for themselves, and how they differentiated between true and false friendship. There was a general feeling that real friends did not put pressure on one to be other than oneself: *"If they didn't hang around with you because you didn't smoke or drink or didn't wear make up, well that really says they're not really your friends"* (tr46). Jane concluded that one must be accepted for who one essentially is if the friendship is authentic: *"If they didn't take me for who I am, well then they're not really your friends. You just be yourself"* (tr46). Saoirse suggested that not all girls smoked and drank because of boys; they did it because their parents set the example and *"they think that's the right thing to do, so they should do it"* (tr46). A long discussion on the dangers of smoking ensued, listing the dangers to health. Some of these girls showed real anxiety about the fact that their parents smoked and they were fearful of the consequences for them: *"My dad smokes. I'm afraid that he's gonna die"* (tr46); *"My dad smokes. I don't like him"*

smoking.... I do be afraid that he'll get cancer" (tr46). There was a feeling that smokers died younger and would not see old age. Fear for mother was also expressed; Jacinta understood that stress drove her mother back on the cigarettes but she was aware of the consequences: "*My mam's best friend's husband died of smoking and drinking*" (tr46). It was as if these girls had reversed roles and were now protective of their parents.

7.4 Conclusion

In this chapter my focus has been on friendship and interpersonal relationships, looking at the children's ideas on what makes someone a friend. I studied the development of the concept of friendship from middle childhood to late childhood and early adolescence. At age seven to eight a friend could be someone to play with, an imaginary friend, a pet or an inanimate object, or a cartoon character. With increasing cognitive maturity a "*real friend*" was defined in more complex terms. In late childhood and early adolescence there were moral implications in close friendship; a friend had to be trustworthy and loyal and come to one's aid in time of need. Reciprocity involving trust and trustworthiness was expected. Both boys and girls considered the friendship at risk if the friend hurt one's feelings or used one for selfish purposes. There was a sense in the group that friendship implied obligations and responsibilities and a mutual concern for each other's welfare. Friends could reject one if there was a violation of what peers considered good behaviour; such transgressions would be bullying, stealing, cheating or being racist. Similarity of interests was not considered a pre-requisite for friendship for many in my research group but most as they grew older wanted someone to care about them and respect difference.

How boys relate to each other and how girls relate to each other were different in ways which became more marked in late childhood and early adolescence (5th and 6th classes). In this group they were able to articulate and explain these differences in behaviour. Boys were aware of relating to each other in a more physical way, in rough and tumble play without the need for intimate emotional sharing. Girls were deemed to talk their way out of difficult situations, share secrets and isolate others by talking about them "*behind their backs*". This latter behaviour was decried by the girls themselves; a "*real friend*" would not engage in such behaviour. Keller & Edelstein (1993, p. 332) contend that this intimate sharing of each other's concerns plays a significant part in establishing a moral self, characterised by loyalty, trust and dependability.

The themes that emerged at this critical transition confirms the views of Youniss (1980) that in early adolescence exposure carried risks such as being ridiculed for being different, and the one way of ensuring against the negative consequences of this was by having close friendships. Many of the girls in this study group became cautious and fearful of expressing an opinion for fear of being laughed at, not only by boys but by other girls. They yearned for real friendship and their strong voices in the girls-only discussion showed that they had a robust resistance to false relationships. They were aware of the pressures to follow the herd and to drink and smoke to impress the boys. In this group of girls there was an intimate atmosphere; I could feel a strong connection with the girls and had a sense that they trusted me. They took risks in exposing themselves and I could sense that they were aware of their feelings and of what they wanted. Daring to be oneself and to be authentic in a world where false relations beckoned, seemed to be the predominant feeling among the girls at the end of their disclosures in the group. Their self-consciousness in the presence of boys, allowing the latter to dominate in other discussions, may have been a factor in showing a low estimate of what boys expected from them in a relationship. Some attributed the boys' more active participation in the group throughout the year to their need to preserve their "*reputation*" and to appear "*brave*" to their friends – a face-saving exercise to preserve dominance.

In these last discussions very crucial issues related to children's moral development were raised and I shall advert to them again in my concluding chapter. There is the tension between the need to be independent and the need for affirmation from others. I come to know who I really am by virtue of my relationship with others; I only grow in relationship but I have to resist the pull of particular relationships. If I have to hold back who I truly am and appear to be what others want me to be, then I have lost touch with my authentic self. Becoming a moral self involves me in listening to the voice of conscience, in making responsible informed choices, in being mindful of the welfare of others as well as my own, and ultimately in being oriented towards a love of the Good.

CONCLUSION

8 CONCLUSION: RESEARCH OUTCOMES AND IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Introduction

In Part II I have analysed and interpreted the thinking of the children in my study group both in content and process and explored the influence of the community of enquiry forum, in this case Thinking Time – Philosophy with Children, on shaping their interactions. In this concluding chapter I will discuss the research outcomes, reflecting back on the two main parts of the study. My aim is to review what has been learned from the study, to consider the extent to which it has answered the main questions posed at the outset, and to discuss the significance and implications of the main findings for practice, policy and research.

The development of a capacity for critical moral reflection and commitment is perhaps more urgent now than ever. In the present climate in Ireland utilitarian considerations seem to take precedence, eroding our higher moral aspirations. The idealism of children could get lost in an Irish society and economy that has changed considerably in a short period of time. Children are under a whole range of social, psychological and emotional pressures to compete and succeed in a society where the values of consumerism predominate. In this climate it may be a matter of great consequence to keep a moral vision alive. An article in *The Irish Times* of March 30th 2005 entitled “Embattled teachers try to lessen impact of ‘consumer culture’” bears witness to the concern felt in educational circles. The National Children’s Strategy (Government of Ireland, 2000, p. 27) confirms the need of all children for acknowledgement, validation and promotion of the moral and spiritual dimension of their lives by their peers, parents, and other significant adults.

It is in this context that the present study aims to offer insight into how children form their views as they struggle to come to terms with complex moral issues such as duty and moral obligation, freedom and responsibility, friendship and relationships, peer pressure and bullying, racism and exclusion, justice and fairness. It is in this context also that it draws attention to the importance of a forum such as the community of enquiry in which these issues are mediated, allowing children to develop and deepen their understandings. The potential of this forum to promote an expansive notion of the

good, to develop the moral dispositions of students, and to promote an enriched notion of citizenship will be examined in relation to the outcomes of the earlier analysis.

8.2 Discussion of outcomes

In analysing the outcomes of this research in the three chapters of Part II the insights from the research into the literature in Part I guided my understandings throughout. I have dealt with this analysis in three main categories. Chapter five is concerned with children's cognitive processes, chapter six with notions of moral rectitude, and chapter seven with friendships and interpersonal relationships. In this discussion of outcomes I am looking at the significance of these findings and in extrapolating from them I am examining their wider salience. What is the significance of children's notions of right and wrong and their competence to reflect on moral issues? Were our discussions in the community of enquiry just a talking shop or did they lead to a heightening of moral consciousness and a development of moral sensibilities, and ultimately to a disposition to moral action? I will deal with these questions in the following sections as well as examining the group dynamic and the significance of boys' and girls' different styles of interaction and participation.

8.2.1 Competence to reflect on moral issues

One of the main findings to emerge from this study was the increasing competence of the children in a community of enquiry to reflect on moral issues, to engage each other, make reasoned judgements, justify their reasons, and change stance in light of opinions of others. This social and cognitive competence, the entry into argumentation, which Habermas (1990) conceives of as communicative autonomy, developed from slow uncertain beginnings and gained momentum and a sense of direction over time. Trust was something that could not be taken for granted but emerged with acceptance within the group and with increasing ease with the format of enquiry. This sense of belonging, having a voice and being heard and the assurance that what they had to say mattered led to a stronger sense of community, and speaking in terms of *we* as well as *I*, for most of the children in the group. Being challenged to defend their views and be held accountable helped many to reflect, rethink and change stance. The ability to backtrack

from an entrenched position and to modify one's views in light of the opinions and arguments of others was a measure of the trust and ease a child could feel with peers. It was also a tribute to their open-mindedness as this change sometimes arose from personal reflection and at other times was precipitated by pressure of argument from peers, enabling the child to emerge with a greater sense of autonomy and belonging in the community.

The significance of the peer experience in mediating the development of competence was evident throughout the study. The scaffolding of more able pupils manifested itself in advancing the argument, questioning and stretching the imagination of others and bringing the focus back to the issue in question when it had gone off on a tangent. Daring to challenge or disagree with the teacher's opinion marked a turning point in competence and confidence. This happened relatively infrequently but particular children were more drawn into the whole process than others. The community of enquiry could be deemed to have a formative quality. In the articulation of their views in a forum of trust and reciprocity, it had a part to play in shaping identity and in developing a secure sense of self.

The community of enquiry forum enabled the children to move from self-involved monologue or egocentric thinking to real dialogue, openness and responsiveness. From unfocused circular thinking with a lot of intervention from me, they gradually moved to a position where eventually they were able to grapple independently with complex issues, formulate questions, think situations through and arrive at new understandings of moral concepts. Using Egan's (1997) categories it could be said that the Mythic thinking characterised by fantasy and conjecture in middle childhood gave way to Romantic understanding in late childhood with its attendant gains and losses. The losses were reflected in the abandonment of puzzlement in favour of realism and a new fascination with scientific facts, and the telling of anecdotes with the self as hero. This was a feature of boys' rather than girls' thinking. Loss of metaphor after the age of eight was noticeable. How to retain some of this sense of wonderment and puzzlement as one grows older is a challenge facing educators. Verbal competency and an ability to draw analogies, being able to see the relevance of history to current situations marked the gains. As well as a growing ability to make competent moral judgements and to change stance, taking cognisance of the perspective of the other, development was also reflected (as we shall see later in this chapter) in heightened moral sensibilities and in enhanced dispositions to moral action.

The classroom community of enquiry served as a real life model fostering good thinking and interpersonal growth in the practice of community and has significance for future participation in the wider community. With increasing habituation in the enquiry forum the dialogue became more pupil-driven; it allowed the children responsibility for direction and leadership. Children, with increasing confidence developed a sense of who they were and that what they had to say mattered. Self-understanding, according to Dunne (1995, p. 151), is always an understanding of one's relatedness to others and to the good. The Thinking Time practice gave the children an opportunity to reflect on their own experience and to connect with the larger whole. MacIntyre (1999) claims that it is in standing back from one's own desires and evaluating them that one makes oneself accountable. In the interchange in Thinking Time self-esteem was visibly enhanced in many of the participants as they gained confidence in self-expression and profited from the interaction of others. Research findings confirm that children need others to become themselves and to understand the selves they become (Splitter & Sharp, 1995; Mead 1934; Vygotsky 1981).

There were a few children in the group who did not seem to advance as much as others and whose best contribution rarely progressed beyond agreeing with another's opinion in a few brief words. This could be partly attributed to lack of ability in self-expression and shyness or fear of having the attention of the group focused on them. For some, being able to make any utterance at all called for effort and courage. When questioned about it privately they insisted they were happy in the group. One boy who voiced an opinion which differed from the others in the final session told me afterwards that he could do it if he did not look at the camera or the others but instead cast his eyes to the ground while speaking. He was very pleased that he had managed to make a contribution and I would like to think that his desire to participate and contribute is representative of shy children.

Trust, which developed gradually, enabled the children to take a risk, to question, to back-track from an entrenched position and take on board the views of others. This atmosphere of trust enabled a decentring from one's own position and to self-correct and become active thinkers. Empathy and reciprocity, central in dialogue, helped build relationships and deal in a caring way with other participants in the group. The aim was not to defeat an opponent as in debating but to get at the truth of things in a collaborative fashion. In this search for truth one is provided with a larger frame of reference from which to reflect on self. Experiencing oneself in relationships, according

to Mustakova-Possardt (2004, p. 254), fosters empathic concerns with others and these concerns can gradually move beyond interpersonal relationships into larger social concerns with justice and equity.

Conceptions of obedience in the younger years were modified to considerations of equity as the children matured, and this was evidenced particularly in the Heinz dilemma discussion. The ability of some children to take account of the particulars when making moral judgements became more evident in the final two years of the study. These children saw that blanket condemnation and generalisations could not do justice to particular cases. Consideration of the intention of the agent and the particulars of the case were essential in making an adequate moral judgement. In the discussion on capital punishment empathic considerations held sway over retribution for wrong-doing. One boy's sympathy for the Oklahoma bomber led him to minimise the enormity of the crime and the number of lives lost. An exploration of what execution entailed, the killing of the perpetrator of a crime without allowing him the time or years to experience sorrow or remorse influenced many children to ponder deeply on the value of every human life and to oppose this form of punishment.

The children's ability to take the perspective of the other developed as they got older. While they could reflect on the unfairness of the child's world with all power vested in the adult, they could also understand matters from their parents' perspective and reflect on the fact that they were likely to act in a similar fashion when their turn came to be parents; they would similarly place restrictions on children out of a spirit of protectiveness. Being able to articulate fears in regard to compliance with the well-intentioned wishes of their parents was a measure of the trust and ease they felt in the community of enquiry. The fear that parents will make decisions for him and make him into something of their choice rather than his, was aptly articulated by one boy and echoed the fears of others, aged twelve, when they increasingly need to assert their autonomy.

The children showed the capacity to move beyond a rule bound morality to explore a more expansive notion of the Good. This was evident in rigid views giving way to increasing sensitivity to the weak, whether human or animal, in several of their dialogues. Their awareness of the interdependence of all forms of life and advocacy of responsible use of the earth's resources was notable.

The collaborative search for truth has significance in resisting a slide towards subjectivism and relativism. In the discussions involving the contrast between moral

and legal sense of “right” such as the Heinz dilemma and Robin Hood, the children were evaluating and making fine distinctions, trying to arbitrate between conflicting claims. At the younger ages of eight and nine avoiding trouble was uppermost. One obeyed to avoid getting caught, pre-conventional thinking in Kohlberg’s (1981) terms. As the children matured considerations of equity began to take precedence. These discussions engaged not only their critical capacities in examining core values such as the value of life taking precedence over the law but also their moral sensibilities. Ultimately, as we shall see presently, it is dispositions as much as beliefs that define the moral person.

The more able children could spot inconsistencies and contradictions in the way they themselves talk and behave. This has value for later participation in civil society. There was recognition that although they profess to love the truth and there was a general consensus that cheating on matters of importance was not excusable, they still lie and cheat and bend the truth when it suits them. Stealing was considered wrong on principle because one stole the fruits of someone else’s labour and did not earn it oneself. The moral vocabulary of the children tended to reflect a strong feeling component; empathic considerations were underlying the principle when children considered the feelings of the victims and how they themselves would feel when something valuable was stolen from them. They frequently expressed moral disapproval and concern for the welfare of others. Hoffman (1993, p. 169) contends that while Kohlberg’s developmental theory assumes the primacy of cognition, empathy plays a significant role in determining whether one becomes committed to a moral principle by giving the principle an affective base.

A feature of the children’s thinking towards the end of the study period was an increasing ability to reflect on their own thought processes, and to explore identity and examine our treatment of others who are different. There was a tendency to challenge racist attitudes and stereotypes and an awareness of our hypocrisy in regard to the marginalized. The children noted that we condemn others for what we do ourselves; for example, we condemn Travellers for throwing litter when we are guilty of similar misdeeds. They noted that people point the finger at foreign nationals for shoplifting and associate it with colour, forgetting the fact that people of their own ilk perpetrate more theft. The labels we use to exclude people, all determined to separate us from one another, were examined. The fact that many of them changed their initial rigid and negative view of Travellers – whom they grouped together under labels of “*rubbish*”,

“robbing” – to an understanding of the young Traveller’s position in the *Young Pavee Voices* (first screened by RTE Television) was a reminder that children rarely get to hear the story of the marginalized and consequently have little if any comprehension of their values or way of life. Their impressions and judgements tend to be made on the basis of media coverage and the negative views of assertive adults. Contact with ethnic minorities and Traveller children was minimal and opportunities to get to know them were few because this study group was a homogenous ethnic group in a Roman Catholic school and to date each of them had lived in Ireland and most in the area where they still lived. (A small number of non-national children were already in the school and the trend was predicted to increase.)

There was no noticeable difference in the contributions and levels of participation of those who had joined the group in the Senior School for the final two years of the study compared with those who had been present from the beginning. In fact, all of those who joined in the latter two years were vocal contributors, and some of those who contributed the least were present from the beginning. The new-comers had a degree of confidence and verbal competence and were easily assimilated and supported by the others already *au fait* with the practice. The group proved to be a hospitable space for new children and, although often challenged, they seemed to blossom within it.

8.2.2 Heightening of moral consciousness

The children in the study seemed to have a well-developed moral sense and this was evident throughout the dialogues in their assertions regarding the dignity of the human being and his or her entitlement to freedom and justice. Most were sensitive to the moral salience of a situation and displayed a sense of personal obligation to follow through on the right course of action. A more expansive notion of the good is evident in the many instances of children’s generosity of spirit, a sense of the importance of relationship and that the self is not an atom – the realisation that some things are important beyond the self. This is in keeping with Taylor’s (1996, p. 25) contention that “human beings have an eradicable bent to respond to something beyond life” and that “denying this stifles”.

In examining issues of justice, moral obligation, freedom, responsibility and inclusiveness, the children tried to make sense of the situations that confronted them as moral agents and sought to arrive at an understanding, and if possible a reconciliation of

opposing values. At age seven and eight their notion of justice was very much governed by those who occupied positions of power and the locus of control was largely external. From age ten to twelve they were increasingly able to decide for themselves, in the light of a developing notion of the good, what was right and wrong, just and unjust. Values seemed to become internalised. Kohlberg (1981) contends that real understanding and respect for authority emerges around the age of ten. In dealing with the race issue, which is a core issue in moral formation, there was a reminder from several in the group that one has an obligation to see the oneness of the human family. Children are capable of generosity of spirit and embracing the whole human race but they are also influenced by the thinking in their immediate environment. Some saw asylum seekers as threatening in many ways and expressed fears of overpopulation, pressure on housing and competition for scarce resources; they regarded them as takers rather than people capable of making a worthwhile contribution, enriching the society which hosts them. On the other hand, some expressed sympathy for foreign nationals and this sympathy influenced others in the group, leading them to change stance, on looking at the bigger picture and examining the fallacies of prejudiced thinking. The same was true of attitudes to Travellers. The suggestion that the solution lay in getting to know them reflected a generous spirit and a belief in the significance of relationship.

Most children seemed to have an understanding of the concept of rights as evidenced in discussing the UN Charter on The Rights of The Child. They singled out some rights as being more important to them than others – for example, the rights to freedom from sexual abuse and to protection from dangerous drugs – but the article most frequently referred to was Article Twelve, the right to an opinion and be listened to and taken seriously. There is a growing recognition of the need to listen to children and take note of their views. The National Children's Strategy (Government of Ireland, 2000) has placed great emphasis on giving children a voice on matters that concern them. In this study the children conceded that, in general, parents knew what was best for them but still contended that they did not always listen to them. At the same time there was recognition among some that there were aspects to childhood that they valued and that equal rights (as children understand them) could mean an end to the freedoms of childhood.

The children's notions of rights extended beyond the defence of basic rights for all humanity to embracing other forms of life. They questioned the privileging of rationality and were adamant that being smarter did not necessarily make us superior.

Animals did not have a voice and the children were horrified at their use for medicinal and cosmetic purposes when they endured suffering and pain in the process. The questions raised by the children in this study pose challenges to the way we see ourselves as dominators rather than custodians of the earth and all forms of life that inhabit it. Does nature exist solely for our benefit? Do people have a right to pollute rivers and oceans for their own benefit? The children saw a preoccupation with jobs as short-sighted. They considered the Sellafield plant in Cumbria a real threat to our existence and saw individual and collective greed as leading to the destruction of the environment. This might encourage us as educators to see the significance of a spirit of interconnectedness rather than exploitation. A bio-centric approach advocates the protection of non-human beings or natural environments for their own sakes rather than just for ours. Splitter & Sharp (1995, p. 233) see the community of enquiry as playing a role in defining and honouring the relationship between humanity and the rest of nature and working out the implications of what it means to be a responsible person in the world.

There was recognition that with freedom comes responsibility. Freedom was a concept understood by the children, not as wanton freedom but freedom to make choices. At all stages in the discussions, freedom to do as one pleased was attractive but was not seen as realistic. They recognised that children need protection and that adults were in a better position to know what is best for them. Nevertheless by age eleven and twelve some strongly advocated freedom to make choices for themselves, freedom from being moulded into what parents wanted of them, and the freedom to have some part of one's life secret and free of restrictions and supervision. VanManen & Levering (1996, p. 100) suggest that adults need to respect this establishment of the boundaries of privacy insofar as this is possible and allow children to develop a separate identity.

Sensitivity to the needs of others has implications for harmonious relations in the wider community. These discussions helped to awaken and heighten children's social consciousness which must surely have significant implication for political participation in later years, though as Walsh has noted, concern for a child's future should not and need not trump attention to their present reality as children (Walsh, 1993, p. 91).

8.2.3 Development of moral sensibilities

The cultivation of moral sensibilities includes fostering a belief in the ultimate meaningfulness of life. In *Robert's Story* (Cam, 1997) the children recognised that one could be fulfilling one's job description without responding fully as a human being, making a distinction between duty as defined by an employer and proper moral response. If it came to a choice some children said they would risk losing the job rather than ignore the cries for help of a person in distress. This resonates with Taylor's (1996, p. 14) contention that ethics involves more than what we are obliged to do; it also involves what it is good to be. In this study the children seemed to understand that commitment to the well-being of another implied that bystander behaviour was not acceptable. Many children had a clear understanding of bullying and the motives that underlie it. Some saw the bully as poor in empathy, basically a weak character who plays on the fears of others: "*It kind of puts a dark thing into you*" (tr33).

In teasing out the rights and wrongs of a particular situation the children were building on and shaping one another's ideas, making connections and distinctions. Should one lie to save one's own skin? Many thought in minor matters it did not matter much if one lied or cheated but there was an acknowledgement that something is lost when one bends the truth and lies with the intention of deceiving. They saw this loss as a loss of pride in oneself. They agreed that the fact that everybody does it does not make an action right. One boy reminded us that the taking of drugs in sport hurts a lot of people. This reference to having pride in oneself arose again in *The Knife* (Cam, 1997) discussion, dealing with minor incidents of stealing. In stealing the fruits of someone else's labour one is taking away one's own pride and losing something precious. The community of enquiry could thus be considered a form of ethical practice, heightening the moral sensibilities of those engaged in the discussion. Murdoch contends that it is the quality of consciousness that matters. True morality, according to Murdoch, is ultimately a love of the Good: "Anything which alters consciousness in the direction of unselfishness, and inspires love in the highest part of the soul is to be connected with virtue" (Murdoch, 1998, p. 377).

Noddings (1984, 1992) argues that moral principles themselves do not provide sufficient motivation for moral action. Care theorists place more emphasis on moral sentiments, cultivating better people rather than better principles or reasoning. Communicative autonomy, knowing oneself through the interaction of others (Habermas, 1990) plays a large part in raising the consciousness of children. For

Socrates the examined life was a life in conversation. Through conversation one deliberated and acquired knowledge, and knowledge that for him equated with virtue. By enhancing the children's judgement and reasoning capacities we are equipping them for challenging situations. How does one know what is right? Can one decide for oneself without considering the views of others? In deliberating on these questions the children veered from asserting that one did not have to consult others if one was absolutely sure of the rightness of one's opinion and had belief in oneself, to seeing the value of consulting peers if a conflict with parents was involved or parents if there was a conflict with peers.

The children pondered over following the dictates of conscience, taking on board the opinions of others and the particulars of the situation. Teasing out these issues led one boy to conclude that chaos would ensue if everybody were to decide for himself or herself what was right because each would believe in the rightness of his or her own position. This points in the direction of the need for a reasonably based consensus on core values. Since these children were in a Roman Catholic school and had religious instruction daily, it was surprising that none of them referred to the guidelines of religion in the discussions of right and wrong. Perhaps they had internalised these values. In discussing Lennon's *Imagine* a view was expressed that we would be better off without religion since it was the cause of so many wars. This view was rejected in favour of respect and tolerance by one of the stronger group members. It is interesting to note that the questions posed by Murdoch are central to most established religions. She suggests that what should be aimed at is goodness, and that we should not be overly concerned with right action but rather with questions such as: "How can we make ourselves better?" "What sort of life is worth living?" (Murdoch, 1998, p. 366).

8.2.4 Friendship, interaction and gender

This study highlights the importance of friendship at all ages. Aristotle termed friendship the bond that holds communities together. Some of the qualities of a good friendship cited by the children remained the same from middle childhood to early adolescence. Trust, empathy and loyalty were the cornerstones of true friendship for the children from age eight through to age twelve. Awareness that one needed to possess the qualities of a good friend if one required them in others was expressed at both ends of the continuum. Playing together and observing the rules of the game were more

important in middle childhood. The broad concept of friendship, embracing imaginary friends, imaginary objects and pets became narrowed with increasing cognitive maturity. The change in perception of friendship was a qualitative one. One expected the friendship and caring to be reciprocated, and hurt was deep if a friend betrayed one. Certain standards of behaviour were expected and the evaluations of peers were significant.

Peer pressure was a factor in friendship. Friends could put pressure on one to conform to the values of the herd as in stealing from shops. Non-compliance could mean isolation but there was consensus that one had to resist this kind of pressure. "*Real friends*" would not put one under this kind of pressure nor could they be bullies – though they might put positive pressure on one to refrain from anti-social behaviour and discourage racist remarks. Having something in common was not a major determinant of friendship for the children at ages eleven to twelve; likeability and willingness to reciprocate mattered more. They could make allowance for difference and some saw conflict as healthy because the negotiation involved in reconciliation could strengthen friendship. The willingness to accept faults in another and to cope with conflict and emerge stronger showed belief in the constancy of friendship.

The importance of friendship and sense of belonging for children emerged strongly in the study, with the qualities of trust and loyalty being much emphasised. While both boys and girls had some common aspirations for friendship such as constancy, mutuality and dependability, there were notable differences in their approach to engagement and conflict. Girls tended to believe in the power of persuasion and that one could talk someone out of a fight. Boys tended to disagree seeing little room for conversation when one was angry and physically involved. Boys raised the issue of utilitarian friendships and expressed scorn for people who pretended friendship in order to gain access to one's possessions. Such people used one and both boys and girls expressed feelings of being hurt at being used by a friend. It was the girls who raised the issue of forgiveness as important in friendship.

Another observable gender difference was that girls acknowledged that they shared secrets while boys asserted that they did not. VanManen & Levering (1996, p. 112) maintain that by about twelve years old, the bounds of friendship and of secrecy coincide and that sharing secrets is significant in forming a separate identity. While the boys in this study saw the sharing of secrets as something pertaining to girls – a fact not highlighted by VanManen & Levering – they were adamant that they wanted privacy

and resented the constant supervision of an adult, particularly when they were with friends. There is a reminder here for parents and teachers of the importance of allowing children space and privacy.

Both genders could decentre and see matters from the perspective of the other reinforcing the idea that the sense of self is socially constructed. Boys saw girls as more vulnerable emotionally, more easily hurt and saw themselves as less likely to be hurt since they communicate in a different way: their contact is more physical involving rough play and they tend not to hold on to grievances. Girls saw boys as having more physical contact and being more competitive. They also thought that in this seeming directness and simplicity of boys' relationships there was an absence of intimate sharing, boys not being allowed to cry, not sharing secrets, having to make an impression, be dominant and save face. The girls attempted to persuade the boys that one could talk one's way out of a fight, confronting them with an alternative to settling matters with flailing fists. The boys insisted that talk is useless when one is physically active, pummelling an opponent.

On their own and out of earshot of the boys the girls were quite critical of boys for their competitiveness, and need for dominance and preservation of reputation within the group, often at the cost of negative behaviour. Some found boys' mocking inhibiting and argued that girls perform better in single sex schools but some girls were aware of their own shortcomings and quite critical of themselves in how they gossiped about each other and held on to grievances. They saw conflict among girls as being verbal and often prolonged. The girls allowed the boys to dominate discussions but some argued that boys needed to be assertive to save face in the group. A study by Lodge (1998, p. 179) of children in middle childhood in an Irish classroom found that in a mixed-gender class, males tended to dominate verbal proceedings with girls participating to a lesser extent than boys in classroom interaction. Her study showed that, overall, boys demanded and received more teacher attention in the classroom. Much of this attention tended to be negative but rewarding for them since increased visibility boosted their self-esteem. Lodge asserts that research findings bear out the greater tendency of boys to communicate with one another physically and verbally in a rough manner and, by comparison to girls, to pay less heed to adult opinions of them (Lodge, 1998, p. 264). An exception to this in my study was one boy's assertion of the unfairness meted out to boys by peers: one is given sympathy when physically hurt but not when one's feelings

are hurt. This could be a reminder that boys also need a sympathetic ear and freedom to express feelings.

Another factor highlighted in the study was the pressure that assails early adolescents. The girls' discussion on their own centred on the concept of authenticity (though the term was not used) and they drew attention to the pressures on them to conform, follow the herd, and the risk of isolation if they dared to be different and to say what they really thought. They were candid about what they really felt, and about how they would risk following their inner dictates, and not compromise for the sake of popularity. Some thought that one must be accepted for who one essentially is. As one straddles girlhood and womanhood life is difficult and fraught with risk. Brown & Gilligan (1992) point to the importance of supporting them at this age in their need to think and feel with other women, and acknowledge that they are capable of caring deeply. This was also borne out in my study; many of the girls' fears extended to worry about their parents and their habit of endangering their health by smoking. The roles now seemed to be reversing; they were being the protective ones and their parents the ones in need of protection.

The findings indicate that the boys were sympathetic towards the girls and were not inhibited by them. On the other hand the girls were very critical of the boys and of themselves. This discussion with the girls on their own points to the need for a forum for girls to be able to express themselves freely away from the competitive atmosphere of the mixed gender classroom. The reticence of girls after age ten to partake fully in discussion and their willingness to allow the boys to dominate raises a question about the value of mixed-gender classrooms as they exist in Ireland where class teaching is largely the norm and the competitiveness of boys in such a system has an inhibiting effect on girls. At the end of the study period I wondered if boys in a mixed gender class would also benefit from a discussion on their own away from the need to prove themselves in the presence of girls. Perhaps for both genders, in different ways, significant issues arise towards the end of primary schooling that need to be better understood and dealt with more insightfully.

Although the study revealed differences in the way boys and girls viewed communication and friendship, significant gender differences were not discernible in the moral reasoning of boys and girls as they dealt with moral dilemmas involving issues of fairness, justice, obligation and responsibility. Thus, Gilligan's thesis that girls reason from a predominantly empathic perspective and boys from a predominantly impartial one was not confirmed. Male and female participants reasoned from empathic

and impartial perspectives and used a mix of moral orientations, depending on the context. This corroborates the findings of Walker *et al* (1987) that it is context rather than gender that determines moral orientation.

8.3 Implications of the study

Having outlined the main findings of the study, I shall conclude with some remarks on their wider import. Some caution here is enforced by the fact that this investigation was an in-depth case study of a single class group in an Irish primary school. It might be contended that such concentrated focus on just one class provides too slender a base for any confident or reliable extrapolation to the wider community of Irish primary school classrooms. There is some justification for this reserve but, without reopening major methodological issues here, I claim that, as between wide-gauge research with large samples and the statistical techniques they entail, and the kind of micro-ethnography undertaken in this study, some advantage in depth and penetration lies with the latter. This is particularly the case when the object of investigation is an innovative non-mainstream practice such as Thinking Time – and when the aim is not to establish information about what is already being done on a wide front but rather to test the potential of this new practice. For this purpose, it is perhaps enough that the class selected was not in any way exceptional – for example, by containing unusually gifted children or being in an especially favoured area socio-economically or otherwise that might make it manifestly unrepresentative.

8.3.1 Implications for practice

The study demonstrates the importance of being aware of children's moral thinking, that they have their own opinions and need to be given a forum where they can articulate their views and be respected for them. The curricular emphasis on literacy and numeracy means that some children are deemed less able than others. In Thinking Time-Philosophy with Children all can have a voice and be considered competent. This was borne out in this study by the fact that a few of the most vocal and confident in the group had the lowest attainment in literacy. In the safe setting of the community of enquiry they could feel that what they had to say mattered and they could feel affirmed and valued.

Focus on content is not enough. Teachers need to help children to reflect on the *ways* in which they are thinking. Searching for truth and meaning is more relevant to children now than ever because of the confusion and uncertainty of living in a pluralist society. How might we further advance and develop children's moral thinking? Is there a way of protecting and enhancing the transcendent self – the self that seeks for truth, goodness and beauty – or perhaps some postmodern equivalent of what these transcendental values have meant for human beings, at least since Socrates and other great figures of what Karl Jaspers called the Axial age? Pedagogy needs to concern itself with personal ethical flourishing, have some conception of excellence and foster a sense of virtue in the children. It is not clear where moral education finds a home in the Irish school curriculum. Apart from religion class, where the core values of a particular religion are taught, there is some scope in the recently introduced subject Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE). There is a danger however that this subject might be confined to purely psychological concerns and in avoiding this it might very profitably be informed by insights gained in the study.

The evidence accumulated here suggests that the experience of a community of enquiry helps children to deliberate wisely, and encourages them to make informed and responsible judgements. The inclusion of Thinking Time – Philosophy with Children as part of a whole school policy would prove valuable in challenging children to question and think through their assumptions, appreciate diversity and respect the feelings and emotions of others. It would have a part to play in fostering consistency between one's beliefs and real-life choices. Incorporating the spirit of Thinking Time into the whole way that the school is organised would have wider significance in giving due recognition to children's views and implicating them in matters that concern them. This is in keeping with the vision of the National Children's Strategy (Government of Ireland, 2000, p. 8) that children are citizens whose rights need to be strengthened in legislation, policies and practices – not least their right to express their views.

Participating in a study such as this one impacts on the researcher as much as on the participating children. Although I considered myself impartial and equally committed to the well-being of boys and girls in the group, long immersion in the group endeared the participants to me. It was not possible to be completely impartial nor was it desirable in the face of the children's openness and candour. They expressed their thoughts and feelings and I sometimes felt humbled in their presence. Their generous sharing of their own deeper thoughts and feelings helped me to understand what it was like to stand in

their shoes and I had a sense of regret when the time came to part with them. On their final day in primary school one month after our final Thinking-Time session the children took their leave of all their teachers and many were tearful. Some of the girls, to my surprise since I had already bade farewell to the whole group, sought me out in the Junior School, laden with presents and "Thank You" cards. None of the boys did. Perhaps they would have been embarrassed at this age to present a lady with a present!

The study also impacted on the class teacher who took part in the final two years of the study. She noted that participation in a community of ethical enquiry led to an improved ability to formulate challenging questions in other areas. She was unsurprised when on a visit to The National Gallery the guide remarked on the number of searching questions posed by these children. This was just one of many instances of transfer benefits that she recounted. She also asserted that listening skills in the classroom were enhanced and responses to opposing views became more focused on the issue being debated and less on the personalities of the protagonists. It led her to be more aware of the children as co-decision-makers. Their judgements and decisions on what course of action to take were influenced by standards and yardsticks they had discussed as a community.

8.3.2 Implications for citizenship

MacIntyre (1981) suggests that the self has to find its identity in and through communities and on the basis of the evidence adduced in this study, I feel confident in claiming that the community of enquiry has a part to play in the social construction of the self. According to Splitter & Sharp, this community is potentially a model of democracy in the classroom, a model of how to prepare young people for citizenship. As participants they have an opportunity to widen their horizons, taking into account the concerns and perspectives of others as they reflect on the consequences of their own actions on the world (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 246). The community of enquiry has the potential to influence children's life-long learning. Critical self-reflection and commitment to discourse are what is needed for participation in the democratic system. In this study some discussions for example, on the environment and animal rights, engaged the moral sentiments and dispositions of the children. They had a strong sense of ecological responsibility and were critical of adults for their instrumental outlook. Having a forum where their voices could be heard could promote an awareness of

collective responsibility and an enriched notion of citizenship. Being mindful of responsibility for our fellow human beings and sensitivity to the needs of the handicapped as in *Robert's Story* (Cam, 1997) helped the children towards a strong collective conscience and the fostering of moral sentiment.

Without the right kind of nurture in social contexts, moral sentiment can atrophy. What is needed, according to Bauman (1995), is more autonomy for individual selves and more vigorous sharing of collective responsibilities. Otherwise one remains focused on individual comfort and instrumental purpose. Moral issues must be constantly discussed and debated if they are to be understood. While the children in this study were beginning to acquire political consciousness and to understand the role of government in the provision of services, they needed reminding of the part they themselves could play in safeguarding the environment, and in their treatment of others particularly with regard to stereotyping and prejudice. This kind of discussion can further the belief that life has meaning and that each individual has a part to play in the social fabric.

Dunne argues that the kind of knowledge being promoted by the State is the kind that would create a skilled work force, utilitarian considerations being uppermost. This narrow conception of knowledge is not the kind that can deliver the kind of solidarity that a healthy conception of citizenship requires. This notion of solidarity, how one understands who one is, one's sense of identity, is at the core of community. This sense of collective participation, speaking of *we* as well as of *I*, marks the disposition of mind required for active citizenship. The crucial modern challenge, according to Dunne, is finding ways of reconciling the roles of the modern subject as economic agent, as bearer of rights and as citizen (Dunne, 2002, p. 78).

If we are to foster personal and civic morality there is need for a strong moral education. Children are the hope of the new society and their idealism needs to be nurtured. In postmodern Ireland, with the credibility of religion in decline, children may seem to have more freedom, but this freedom can become vacuous, becoming little more than the freedom of the market, the freedom of rampant individualism. The values of a consumer society, creating wants rather than satisfying genuine needs, point to a moral vacuum. "Soft relativism" (Taylor, 1989, 1991), a growing amoralism and indifference to the plight of the marginalised and less well-off, gravely threaten our active participation as citizens in a civil society. The problems that beset Irish society are reflected in western societies worldwide where the pursuit of individual self-interest takes precedence over concern for the common good and the welfare of all. This

preoccupation with self-fulfilment cannot, according to Taylor, sustain a strong identification and commitment with the political community. He sees the need for a recovery of a language of commitment to a greater whole if society is to survive (Taylor, 1989, p. 508).

It is as part of a counter thrust to all this that a critically dialogical practice such as Thinking Time has, it can be argued, an important role. Moral education needs to find a place in some form in the Irish curriculum, where moral and civic values are reflected in how we respect and care for one another. While we have an awareness of the rights of others – and a somewhat attenuated moral vocabulary to articulate it – this awareness needs to translate into a capacity for genuine moral reflection and honest caring. Change in the cultural make-up of our society has confronted us with issues of racism and discrimination. A new awareness of Irishness that includes all colours and creeds together with respect and tolerance for cultural difference is called for. The present challenge to cherish all of the children of the nation equally could hardly have been envisaged a decade ago. A recent government publication *Intercultural Education in the Primary School* (NCCA, 2005) which was circulated to all primary school teachers, goes some way towards raising awareness among teachers of the importance of respect for other cultures and lifestyles. I suggest that a community of ethical enquiry such as the one described in this study would go a long way towards the creation of thinking, caring and sensitive children, aware of and respectful of difference, and towards furthering a healthy conception of citizenship in tomorrow's adults.

8.3.3 Implications for future research

This research provides rich detailed insights into the thinking of one group of children in prolonged engagement over a period of almost five years. It furthers our understanding of the thinking of that group's development in moral responsiveness and thinking from middle childhood into early adolescence but clearly, as a study, it has limits, an appreciation of which may suggest lines along which further research might profitably be conducted. One fruitful line of enquiry concerns the implementation of the SPHE programme in Irish primary schools. Given that the implementation of this programme is at an early stage, and given the moral-civic nature of much of its content, a research project investigating possible ways in which the norms and procedures of

Thinking Time could be incorporated into its methodology, has much to recommend it to policy makers and practitioners alike.

Two gender related studies also suggest themselves on the basis of the interpretations offered in the second part of this study. The first concerns girls in the senior classes of primary schools. Is the pattern of reticence on their parts, discerned in this study, evidence of a widespread but insufficiently recognised phenomenon and would it be replicated in other studies of larger relevant populations? If the answer here is in the affirmative, how might steps be taken – including through the conduct of further research – to ensure that the related issues are not only better recognised and understood but are also acted on with greater pedagogical skill in the period of difficult transition from childhood to adolescence and from primary to post-primary schooling?

The second gender related issue that seems to call out for further investigation concerns children's secrets. The most authoritative study on this topic, *Children's Secrets: Intimacy, Privacy, and the Self reconsidered* (Van Manen & Levering, 1996) does not advert to girls' penchant for sharing secrets among themselves or to boys' view of this as a characteristic trait of girls. Are the findings on this issue in my study unusual? Do boys generally see secret sharing as pertaining to girls only? Is their own relative disinclination to share secrets related to a sense on their part that this involves divulgence of confidence and an opening up of themselves and their emotions – something that so far is generally not part of their culture and upbringing? These questions, raised pointedly by the present study and, so far as I can tell, not addressed in existing scholarship, suggest fruitful lines for further enquiry.

Another very valuable type of follow-up study might investigate the vexing interface between moral knowledge and moral action, and the complex factors, imaginative and emotional, that mediate between the two. By its nature, this study was confined mainly, though not I hope exclusively, to investigating children's "knowledge" – though their participation in the community of enquiry was itself of course engagement in a practice and thus a form of action. What would be more interesting to explore – and what would call for a more observational study anchored in diverse locations in the children's life-worlds – is the effects of development in their thinking on their actual behaviour in a range of morally salient situations. A really ambitious and very complex enquiry along these lines might also include a control group not exposed to Thinking Time – another element that could not be accommodated within the limits of this study.

Another more limited form of “transfer” might also be further researched – again perhaps by including a control group. How do changes effected in the children’s modes of thinking, pattern of responsiveness and interactive styles through participation in Thinking Time affect their approach to learning in other subjects, especially subjects such as social and environmental studies and history, that are laden with moral concerns? Or again, what is the impact of the experience of such sustained discussion on learning – and teaching – in religion as a school subject? Are some of the classic issues of the thorny relationship between faith and reason animated in a new way? These and other similar, related questions suggest themselves, not only pointing to fruitful lines of possible enquiry but also, by doing so, confirming, I hope, the very considerable significance of what has been undertaken in this study.

In conclusion, while one cannot generalise from the findings of a single case study, one can learn a lot from a study such as this one. It shows what is possible when children in a particular setting engage in ethical enquiry. Thus it enhances our understanding of the moral sense of children at a particular age and in a particular setting and can provide fertile ground for further research. The inclusion of Thinking Time – Philosophy with Children in whole school policy would have a key part to play in fostering the moral development of children and make a valuable contribution to the formation of future citizens of our democratic polity.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX

The following is a list of all the transcripts of recorded dialogues that make up the raw data for this qualitative research study:

- Tr 1: What happens when we dream?
- Tr2: If there were no television....
- Tr 3: What does Freedom mean to you?
- Tr 4: The Whales' Song....Was the uncle right?
- Tr 5: The Universe
- Tr 6: What is Thinking
- Tr 7: Animals and humans are nearly the same, or are they?
- Tr 8: What does it mean to be Brave?
- Tr 9: What is Beauty?
- Tr 10: What is Will-Power?
- Tr 11: What happens when living things die?
- Tr 12: Was Robin Hood right to rob the rich to help the poor?
- Tr 13: Where did the first trees come from?
- Tr 14: What is Fairness?
- Tr 15: If there were no God....
- Tr 16: What is a good Friend?
- Tr 17: Responsibility (Should Tom tell?)
- Tr 18: Which is more serious: breaking one glass in a temper or 15 by accident?
- Tr 19: Inclusiveness: How can we include those who are different?
- Tr 20: Should Michael O'Connor steal the drug to save his son's life?
- Tr 21: Theft (The Stolen Bike)
- Tr 22: Taking sides in a dispute
- Tr 23: Animal rights: Experiments with animals
- Tr 24: Children's Rights
- Tr 25: What does taking Responsibility mean?
- Tr 26: Do you agree with the Death Penalty?
- Tr 27: Beauty versus Ugliness (*The Velveteen Rabbit* by Marjorie Williams)
- Tr 28: Stealing (*The Knife*, by Philip Cam)
- Tr 29: Friendship (*Linda and Clara*, by Ron Reed)
- Tr 30: Cheating (*Gabriel's Story*, by Ann Margaret Sharp)
- Tr 31: Friendship (*The Fight*, by Philip Cam)
- Tr 32: If everybody disagreed with Joshua could he still be right? (*The Fight*)
- Tr 33: Why do Bullies bully? (*Back in the Playground Blues*, by Adrian Mitchell)
- Tr 34: Duty to Others (*Robert's Story*, by Philip Cam)
- Tr 35: Does skin colour make a difference?
- Tr 36: Travellers
- Tr 37: Travellers (response to video of RTE's *Young Pavee Voices*)
- Tr 38: How much Freedom should eleven-year-olds have?
- Tr 39: What is a real Friend? (*Winged*, by Philip Cam)
- Tr 40: Is it alright to lie to save your own skin? (*Winged*)
- Tr 41: Is it ever right to kill animals for fun, e.g. sport?

- Tr 42: The Environment (*The River's Story* and *The Newcomer*, by Brian Patten)
- Tr 43: *Imagine* by John Lennon
- Tr 44: The Heinz dilemma (Lawrence Kohlberg)
- Tr 45: Children's Rights
- Tr 46: Are girls better off in single-sex schools for their secondary education?
- Tr 47: Is it fair to deport the family of an Irish citizen?

On the following pages is a sample (unabridged) of four of the above dialogues:

- Tr 15: If there was no God (page 3)
- Tr 23: Experiments with animals (page 10)
- Tr 28: Stealing (page 17)
- Tr 46: Are girls better off in single-sex schools for their secondary education? (page 26)

Transcript 15 (2nd class): If there were no God

- Evy begins the dialogue:
- If there was no God there would be no earth.
- I disagree with Evy because if there was just one planet and that was Marsno one would be alive.
- I agree with Evy.
- If you're disagreeing with.....[inaudible] we're saying no-one would be alive, the world would still be there, right?
- Who would have made the world?
- No-one could have made the world.
- It couldn't have been builded by its own.
- There must have been someone.
- A big rock. There must have been a big rock.
- Well, who would make that big rock?
- Just the Universe would make that big rock.
- I agree with Liam because once all the galaxies were just this huge rock that came from oxygen and gas and then one day it exploded and it caught a load of rocks in it, so God didn't really make it.
- If there was no God there would be no us.
- T: I agree with Bill. "If there was no God there'd be no us". I wonder would we live the same way, would we behave the same way if we didn't believe there was a God there.
- If there was no god we wouldn't be saying this because we wouldn't be there.
- Well, I think that God made a big huge piece of paper and He planned what He was going to do and then if we were bad because, am, ah- God just made the planet out of a rock.
- I agree with Fred because we wouldn't be talking right now if there was no God.

- I think if there was no god there'd be no life. I disagree with Caoimhe and Liam and well whoever said "somebody is after making the world" but he probably wouldn't have. God was the first one to step on the earth before any other people stepped on it.
- I think there might be an Earth because I think the devil would have made an earth. He'd make it and make it Hell. He'd put dinosaurs and volcanoes on it. He'd make people and put them into misery and give them mean hearts.
- Ms Russell, if there was no God, there would be no people so the world would be just, like, empty.
- I agree with Liam and Barry because scientists think the world was made because gas exploded and that made the world come.
- I agree with Evy and Bill.
- Some scientists say that the world will end at the stroke of midnight of the millennium but I don't think that will happen. God might just have put that in their minds for a joke.
- I've got a question. How was God born?
- Con, if the devil made the earth, who made the devil?
- I think that God made all that, if there's no God all the other gods could have made the earth.
- If there was no God there wouldn't be any school right now, we wouldn't be in it.
- I agree with Caoimhe Madden. A few years ago they said that the world would end as well.
- A gas explosion is real big. It must have been loads of rocks and I agree with Liam and Barry.
- I agree with Liam because the gas would have exploded. It probably would make those things. And whoever said God was the first person to step on earth, what about Adam and Eve? They were told to be the first people to step on earth.
- God's not really a person, is He? He's a God. I disagree with anybody who said God made the earth because, like, He'd have to be -ah - If the sun just got blocked off, like, the earth would just turn into ice.
- I agree with Liam. What did he say? Oh yea, because if God made the earth first it would be just spinning around, floating into space. And Con, where are you coming to

now? Like, how could the devil just start the earth? Then he would just be floating round like God. And if there was no God, I'd just be sitting around playing marbles all day.

- I disagree with Mick because God didn't step on earth. Adam and Eve did.
- I disagree with Evy and I agree with Kenneth and Liam.
- If there was no God there wouldn't be much religions.
- I disagree with anybody who said God stepped on earth first. He never stepped on earth.
- T: **If** there was no God yes, I agree there'd be no religion. Well, would you bother doing the right thing then?
- You couldn't do the right thing because you wouldn't exist. You wouldn't be in it because God made us.
- Well, if god made us and no one believed in God at all and they didn't know God was there at all, you wouldn't be very holy at all and they wouldn't know about Jesus or anything.
- If God didn't make us and there was no God I think we wouldn't be here at all.
- I disagree with Liam because we wouldn't be here.
- If there was no God and no school we wouldn't be here.
- If there was no God and there was an earth but there was no school on the earth....[inaudible]
- Yea. We wouldn't be here.
- I disagree with Bill and Saoirse because Jesus is God's son. God's son stepped on the earth instead of God.
- I can answer Stewart's question, ah, "Who made the devil"? The same, ah, the same way God was made. The devil was made that way. And I'm saying that the devil might, that if there was no God, there'd be more ways that the devil could be making misery around the whole Universe. So he'd be able to make the earth with dinosaurs and make people and give them misery for amusement.
- I agree with Barry. I think there was an explosion but I think that God made everything *on* the earth but I don't think He made the *actual* earth.

- I disagree with Mick because Jesus wasn't the first one that stepped on the earth.
- Anyway, I can answer Stewart's question about how God was born. You see God just probably just appeared one day up in Heaven.
- I agree with Saoirse and I disagree with Mick because they didn't say that God's son Jesus didn't step on earth. They just said that God didn't.
- Brendan didn't because he asked me what I said. Some scientists say the world will end at the stroke of the millennium.
- I think if there was no God there wouldn't even be a devil.
- Adam and Eve couldn't be the first man and woman to step on the earth because they were quite like us and men evolved and women evolved from monkeys. So they'd just act like monkeys, the first men if they walked.
- God was the first person to touch, oh Brendan, when you said "one day God appeared", well there wasn't any days in those days. God was the first man to touch the earth because He made it and I think that the earth will end on the stroke of the millennium because that's what happened with the dinosaurs. A big rock came in and then all the dinosaurs, they died.
- A rock couldn't come in and kill the dinosaurs.
- An asteroid!
- My mum said that ice killed all of them.
- It was the Ice Age.
- Con, how could the devil be there to make all the dinosaurs?
- I agree with Donald because the world didn't end when the dinosaurs died. If there was no God and there was still a world and everything I don't know what the world would be like because loads of people don't believe in God.
- I disagree with Evy because the dinosaurs, they didn't die because they got a thirst. The scientists think that there was a big asteroid and there was a big volcano.
- Donald, how do you know that it was an asteroid? No one knows if it was an asteroid. They only found it was an asteroid when it actually hit the earth. And whoever says it's going to end at the stroke of the millennium, the earth has had loads of millenniums. It's very old. So why would it just blow up on this millennium? It might be next millennium or the millennium after that. There's going to be loads of millenniums. The earth itself is around five million years. The sun will probably blow up. When that

will blow up it will blow Venus and all the planets. Everything will blow up. The earth has only a few billion light years away. The sun is only about 58,000 light years long. It would blow up the earth in ten seconds with the explosion.

- If people don't stop talking about the earth is going to come to an end I'm going to freak!
- Okay Brendan, the chances of the earth ending are a million to one. A zillion to one! And the earth won't end at the millennium but it may be very hot with the soaring sun. It happened two millenniums.
- I agree with Evy and I disagree with Donald and I disagree with Mick.
- I don't think the world will end at the stroke of the millennium.
- I disagree with Liam because it wasn't ice. It was fire. That's why because Ireland was attached to Europe when the fire came to kill the dinosaurs. A part of the earth sank to the water and then there was only a bit of Ireland left. That's why we have only a very little Ireland.
- T: I don't think the world will end at the stroke of the millennium. Some people have said before that the world is going to end on a certain day because they wanted to sell more candles and make people go out and buy them. People often have a reason for saying those things because they make money if you believe them. If there was no God, I hope there is because if there was no God there'd be no after-life and we'd end when we die.
- I disagree with Barry because the chances of the world ending is zero.
- I don't think the world will end at all because, like, if because they said that before and it never did.
- I don't think the world will ever end because it's loads of years so I don't think it will ever end.
- But Donald is only guessing. I think when Jesus died, He's after, well He's after being God and they'll have to make a new one.
- Well when they say it will end on the millennium they don't say the earth will blow up. I think they might be saying *our* world will end, that *we'll* be extinct and something *else* will go on living on earth, exactly like the dinosaurs.
- I agree with Con.
- Ms Russell, there wouldn't be an after-life because we'd never have had life in the first place if there was no God.

- I agree with Barry because there's been like, nineteen millenniums and why would it just be this one?
- I don't think the world will end because why did they catch on to this one? Why didn't it blow up in all the other ones?
- Brendan, I didn't say that the world would actually end. I said that sometimes *it's said* but it won't. I don't even believe that it would end anyway because they just want to sell more candles. They say that there will be a black-out before the millennium and people are trying to get more candles like Ms Russell said but I didn't actually say that the world will end.
- I don't think that the world will end because I think God made the dinosaurs. He didn't like the way the dinosaurs destroyed the world. And He wanted to make them extinct so that the world wouldn't be so messy when we came along and that we wouldn't be killed by them. I think that's why He made them extinct.
- T: Keep to the point now "If there was no God".
- I hope that the scientists that said the world will end on the stroke of the millennium, I hope they're not *real* scientists because then they're probably right. Back to the point. Am. I think there's nineteen millenniums or something. The dinosaurs – there was an asteroid or a rock because I heard it on the radio.
- T: We'll have to stop you there Donald because Christy is singing a song outside. Maybe he's finished is he? He's finished, thank God, go on.
- I heard it on the radio that it's possible that the world might end this millennium because all the dinosaurs were astray.....and they're sending up this rocket thing to see if there's any asteroids or anything.....
- T: Donald, it's a bit too long. You've said that already. Evy you are last now. We've finished our three rounds. Put up hands anyone who really wants to say something. Evy picks, preferably one who hasn't spoken already. She can speak herself as well. [most hands go up!]
- I agree with Brendan because the world will never end.
- I disagree with Liam Lister because.....[inaudible]
- I disagree with anybody who says that the dinosaurs destroyed the earth because dinosaurs only destroyed the earth to kill their prey.
- Hands up who thinks the world won't end. Then would you please stop talking about it!

- Maybe God was a little seed and the sun's heat inflated and inflated and inflated it and BANG God was just made. And maybe humans were made in the ice age and monkeys made snowmen and the ice age melted and it turned into humans.
 - Why do we have to stop talking about the millennium?
 - Not the millennium. Because it's not the point.
 - People might be scared.
 - What happens if the sun blows up? It will hit the earth and every planet.....
- T: We are going back to the same area again so I think it's time to finish here.

CLOUD TIME.

Transcript 23 (4th class): Experiments with Animals

T: Animals are used in experiments to discover a cure for human diseases. If it were not for these experiments many people alive today would not have survived. Animals are also used to test cosmetics – skin-care and make-up. (I then show pictures of animals most commonly used in experiments: rats and mice for cancer, apes for heart transplants, cats and dogs for various drugs etc.) Our question for discussion today is: Could it be right in some circumstances to experiment on animals?

Fiachra begins the dialogue.

Fiachra: I kinda don't think they should test animals because it's not fair on them. And for make-up and skin, that's basically a disgrace and all that and it's not so fair on the animals.

Brendan Barron: I think it's mean to test drugs and operations on animals and the same way eye-shadow. I wouldn't buy medicine if it had been tested on animals.

Con: Well, I'm just thinking about it's not fair to use them for make-up and eye-shadow because like we're killing animals just to make us look a tiny bit prettier. It's sort of like stupid because we've extinct a lot of animals and now we're painning them just to save us because it's a bit stupid. We kill them and now they're sacrificing lives to help make us live, like. It's disgraceful.

Stewart: I think it's disgraceful as well. Just think of it from the animals' point of view. If you were one of the animals you wouldn't want a person doing an experiment on you.

Cian: I agree with Stewart but I think in some cases it's okay to kill animals like ants. I think they're stupid. Why don't they just do transplants on something like ants.

Bill: I agree with Stewart. They have a right to live to live.

Donald: I agree with Fiachra. It's a disgrace to use animals to be pretty and they could get extinct.

Evy: I agree with Stewart because animals are just like humans and I wish that there were other kinds of creatures in this land that they could use.

Donald: Like you!

T: That's mean. Now don't embarrass anyone please.

Grace: I don't really think it's a good idea to inject animals with all these diseases because it's not fair to the animals.

Clodagh: Yea. They don't even get to say if they want it or not. They don't get a right to say that they don't want it done on them.

Caoimhe Orde: They shouldn't be tested because like they have rights the same.

Liam: I agree with Con because it's not very good to be doing that to animals.

Barry: I don't think it's fair. They were here long before us. We're hurting them.

Mick: I think animals should get treated the exact same as humans should because they shouldn't get killed. If you were that animal you wouldn't want an experiment, would you?

Aisling: Animals don't know what's going on to them in testing. They might die and they don't know what happened to them.

Saoirse: Yea. I think that if humans want to make make-up out of tests on animals they should test it on a human. If it's hurting it should be tested on humans.

Caoimhe Madden: I think it's not fair because animals could get extinct and it's just not fair.

T: As far as I know they don't use animals that are threatened with extinction. That's why they use cats and dogs and mice and rats. They're easy to breed. They can have lots more of them and they're not threatened. I think we are agreed that using them for make-up isn't right because we could do without that. But I wonder if I had a little brother who was dying of some disease would I sacrifice an animal just to make him better. I wonder would I?

Kenneth: Maybe now in the middle of an operation this animal you're operating on just sits up and says "Hey you! Go away! Go test it on some human! I don't want to die. I'm too young to die. Maybe I'm too smart to die.

Brendan B: I disagree with Cian because ants aren't animals. They're insects.

Con: I agree with everyone who said that animals, who sided with animals, okay?

Stewart: If somebody like my friend or part of my family was sick and they're finding a cure I wouldn't think it right to use it on animals because they wouldn't even find a cure for it and they just kill an animal and not find a cure.

Cian: I disagree with Brendan on 'ants are just insects'. Insects are animals. They're tiny little animals that have six legs and they're part of the animal family.

Donald: I disagree with Stewart because ah if somebody in your family really was sick you would actually do anything to save them. And apes are very smart and I agree with Evy because if there were more Evys on the planet we should test them on her.

Jacinta: I agree with Aisling.

T: Donald, I draw the line here. That's against the ground rules: respect others. We look after everybody in this group. Isn't that fair, children? I wouldn't like anyone to be embarrassed. Would you apologise to Evy, Donald.

Donald: Sorry!

Jacinta: I agree with Aisling because the animals could die anyway with shock.

Jane: If someone in my family was dying.....I wouldn't do it on animals.

Caoimhe Orde: It's bad enough to test it on animals.

Liam: I disagree with Jane because if your little sister was dying you would agree with testing on animals because the family is more important than a few animals.

Barry: Evy, the first time you were talking, am it's not even fair to use animals that are stupid.

Mick: If your brother or your father was dying you'd have to do something.

Aisling: If it was somebody in my family, it's not fair to let a person die and the animal live.

Saoirse: I agree with Aisling. I wouldn't either if it was a person in my family. I'd probably know the person in my family longer than the animal.

Caoimhe Madden: I think animals have the exact same rights as humans.

T: If I'd agree with the killing of animals to save a person in my family what about saving somebody I don't know at all? People say 'ah well, it's alright to use mice and rats and we're killing these anyway'.

Are their lives less important than cats and dogs?

Kenneth: I'd like to continue what I was saying last time. I've lots to live for like. If some human is going to die in five minutes, say he's going to die anyway. Give him the injection. He's going to die anyway.

T: Kenneth, who dies in five minutes?

Kenneth: You don't test it on the animal. You test it on the human who's going to die in five minutes.

Fiachra: I wouldn't help anybody I don't really know because they could be a murderer or something. I don't think they should test it on rats. My friend has 16 of them in a cage.

Brendan B: I've got two parts to my answer. I think rats have the same rights as other animals as well. They're still basically animals, like. I probably wouldn't test animals for someone I don't know because ah the same as Fiachra like.

Con: Well, I sort of agree with Brendan and Kenneth because if I was testing it on a hamster I'd test it on him when he was three years old because hamsters only live for about two or three years. So I'd test it on really really old animals who are going to die very soon. It's better than testing on animals really young.

Stewart: I agree with Brendan because I wouldn't like....when you think about it, if your sister or your brother was dying you probably would want to do it if you think about it.

Cian: I disagree with Con because say if the animal was dying anyway and you wouldn't know if it was because of the disease or say it naturally had some disease, right, like BSE and it died anyway. You wouldn't know if that cure didn't work or if it was dying of age. And am I kind of agree with Ms Russell because I think it's unfair that rats really don't do anything bad. You know the way we heard about Foot-and-Mouth. The rats are just carrying diseases. They're just going around getting food. That's their natural thing. That's the way they were made.

Bill: I agree with Barry. Animals have a right to live. A dodo should be alive right now. And humans don't have rights to take cats and rats to kill.

Donald: Stewart, am, I told you so and I agree with Barry and Bill. The dodo was kind of stupid but when there was not much of them left they still should have lived because they had as much rights as any other animal.

Jacinta: If someone in my family was dying I'd like to save them but I wouldn't like to kill an animal because I think it's cruel.

Jane: I agree with Jacinta.

Grace: I agree with Caoimhe because animals do have rights and I disagree with Con. They're more likely to test the disease on animals that are young.

Clodagh: I disagree with Con too because if they try to cure whatever animal, they wouldn't know if they could save them or not because they'd just die.

Caoimhe Orde: People say like you can just do it on animals but they're still living and they're still creatures.

Liam: In this lab somewhere they had these monkeys to drill into their skull to get a certain thing out and in about five months they die and they do this to every monkey.....

Barry: I think if somebody was about to die and if they knew they were about to die.....

Mick: I agree with Liam and Barry.....

Aisling: I disagree with Con because if the animal was about to die, it would want to be just let die. Then you do an operation on it, it'll probably just die.

Tracy: I agree with Con.

T: Tell us why Tracy. (Tracy stays silent).

Anna: I disagree with Con because they shouldn't do it on animals.

T: I wonder when scientists get animals into the laboratory are they interested in the animals or are they mainly interested in testing out their drugs or diseases. Is the same animal tested again and again and the creature is only kept there for experiment. When we get to Fiachra he can pick a speaker because we've done three rounds with the tip. Then we go back to the first person with the hand up.

Kenneth: Con, you said they (should) test on animals that are about to die. They (should) test on humans that are about to die. And Cian, ants are too small to operate on.

Cian: I know. I'm aware of that.

Kenneth: You could easily burn it (an ant) with a magnifying glass.

Jane: I think it's done for the experiment. It's like a child born that doesn't know what a monkey is. They see pictures but they don't know what it really looks like.

Sally Tully: I disagree with Con because if you operate on an older animal it's going to die quicker.

Grace: Whoever does that in the lab is cruel to the animal.

Barry: We're always eating animals in meat and also for their skin and that's not right either. I disagree with Con because if you only kill an animal when they're old, ah I could never kill an animal but I eat meat.

Con: That was the eleventh person who disagreed with me. I've been counting.

T: You've made a lot of people think, Con.

Con: There's a few people I want to say thank you because they said the same thing. They didn't say they disagreed with me so Thank You!

T: Children, if everybody agreed with you there wouldn't be much of a discussion. It's by agreeing and disagreeing that we have a good argument, isn't it? So don't be offended if someone disagrees with you. That's good.

Fiachra: Con, you made me worry because my hamster is getting quite old and I'm worried that it might die.

Mick: I disagree with Con because I had a goldfish that was six years old. I had a hamster that was four years old.

Barry: I would give my life to save an animal.

T: Do you eat meat then?

Barry: Yea.

Liam: How can people say that they don't like to kill animals and everyday they probably eat ham, turkey or beef or pork and then they come in here and they say that they disagree with killing animals?

Cian: I agree with Liam. It does kind of make sense like. We're just killing them either way for our own enjoyment. We could survive without eating much meat. When you go to MacDonalds you're getting to kill animals for your own enjoyment like.

Bill: I agree with Liam about the monkey thing because like we're half ape and human. It's not fair to kill apes because we're half apes.

Stewart: If you were really old and someone wanted to experiment on you then you wouldn't like them to do it.

Donald: Con, I've a surprise. I disagree with you and I agree with Aisling because they'd rather be left to die on their own than go through pain and suffering. Because if you die on your own of age, they'd be happy to die on their own.

T: Who are you talking about? Who'll be happy, animals or people?

Donald: Animals. They'd be happy to die on their own than in suffering and pain.

T: Pick the girls now. There are a lot of boys talking.

Donald: Barry.

Barry: I should have agreed with you Liam. I hate eating meat but at least I'm not cruel. I'm addicted to it (meat).

Aisling: Animals eat other animals like deer in the wild and it's not cruel for them to kill animals. If you were wild you would eat animals too.

T: So that animals eat each other, is that the point?

Evy: the only meat I eat is chicken and turkey because I don't like any other. We go to MacDonalds and I love vegetables. It isn't very nice to kill vegetables!

END

Transcript 28 (5th class): Stealing (*The Knife*, by Philip Cam)

Did Carl do wrong in stealing the knife? What makes stealing wrong?
Evy begins the dialogue.

Evy: I think he did wrong because people have to work to get money for their family. When you steal something then they don't get the money.

Kenneth: If he didn't steal the knife he'd still feel okay but if he kept the knife he'd have a guilty conscience.

Con: I think he was wrong to steal because if everyone went around stealing things nothing would be good. You couldn't trust anybody and you'd be like when somebody into your house you'd be watching them all the time.

Cian: I agree with Con and I agree with Kenneth because stealing is wrong.

Stewart: I think stealing is wrong because if you steal somebody else's possessions, if you steal it you can get in big trouble and it's wrong.

Ms Lawless: Yes, I would agree with people so far that stealing is wrong for many reasons. People steal things but why is it wrong to steal just nothing? 'Twas only an old knife really. Why was it wrong to steal something that had no real value in itself? And yet I think he did wrong. It wasn't belonging to him. It was belonging to somebody else.

Brendan McArthur: I disagree with Con because you said that stealing is wrong but yet if everybody was stealing and you didn't want somebody to steal and you had a gun, you probably had to steal that gun as well.

Brendan Barron: I think it's wrong to steal because think how the other person would feel if you stole something valuable from them.

T: If everybody else was doing it and all your friends said it was okay to steal I wonder would that make it okay?

Caoimhe Orde: I think stealing is wrong. I think if you really want something you should work for it and you'd feel better about it as well.

Sally: If all my friends were stealing I still wouldn't because it's wrong to steal.

Barry: I totally disagree with Con because if you couldn't trust anyone and everyone was stealing that that would mean you'd be stealing and it would be wrong like to do like them.

Liam: Some people said if all their friends were stealing that they wouldn't do it but it's kind of hard not to because the pressure comes on and they'd call you a chicken.

Eamon Murrin: I think it's wrong to steal because if it becomes a habit then you could get caught.

Fiachra: if Carl didn't have any friends he'd probably go up to someone and say "Give me money or I'll stab you".

Donald: I agree with Liam because like if everybody else was doing it it'd be hard like not to join in. Stealing, if everybody else was doing it and you didn't they wouldn't like you any more because you're "chicken" and all that.

Jane: I agree with Liam because if your friends did say that you're chicken and all I don't think it's very fair. They're the ones that are stealing. It would put pressure on you because they'll say "I won't be your friend if you don't". You shouldn't be their friend if you have to steal against your wishes.

Clodagh Mulhearn: I don't think you should steal because it doesn't belong to you and if it doesn't belong to you, you shouldn't take it.

Kathleen: I agree with Evy because if everyone steals.....

Mick: I disagree with Ms Lawless because.....

Kenneth: What's the point in stealing when you can get cash and get it?

Con: I agree with Liam and Donald because if everybody's doing it and not being friends with you if you don't do it so you really sort of have to like. And Ms Lawless, you were saying that we know it's wrong but it's worth so little, I want to point out to you, in the story it says: "Look", Pete cautioned, "You could still be caught. Like you said, you were the only one in the store, and that knife is worth a lot of money".

Stewart: If you steal everybody would be asking you "Where did you get that and you'd have to lie to everybody and then 'twould get to you eventually.

Ms Lawless: Even if things are worth a lot of money they're still only things. I suppose it's a question of I would say: Are there some things in life more important than things like knives you can get money for, cars you can get money for. To me it seems in the story here what was more important to Carl in the end. He didn't choose to give back the knife that was worth a lot of money because he found something else more important. The question we have to ask in relation to Liam and Donald's comment is: Can you get over that stage when you have to be part of the gang to do something wrong? Is there something more important that can make us value something more than a knife worth a lot of money?

Brendan McArthur: I disagree with Con because if you took a knife and it's worth a lot of money not many people would buy a knife singly. Most people wouldn't buy a knife for say £29. I kind of agree with Donald and Liam but disagree with them as well because like

you could get over them calling you “chicken”. But you couldn’t get over your conscience for stealing something valuable.

T: Yes, I think that’s an interesting point. You could get over it. You’re under pressure. They’re calling you “chicken”. If you don’t want to be isolated, does it make it okay or is it still wrong?

Barry: I kind of agree with Brendan because if you steal something it is worth a bit but like your conscience would probably eat your mind. Then you’d get a bit disturbed and that’s worth a lot more than the knife.

Caoimhe: I agree with Brendan.

Donald: I disagree with Brendan because if they called you “chicken” you would kind of get upset and then they’d keep calling you stuff and then like you’d have no friends. Yea. You’d be a loner. You wouldn’t like that at all.

Jacinta: What if your friends are stealing and they ask you to do it and you said it was wrong they called you “chicken”. If you said “No” they’d probably tell you to pick between them. If you said you didn’t want to steal, they’d say you’re not being our friend any more.

Jane: In the story I have a point where the boy’s really saying that friendship is better. It’s more valuable than a knife, so if the knife is worth much friendship has no price.

Clodagh M.: I don’t think he should steal it because it is not right.

Kathleen: I agree with Jane because if you lose a knife you can just buy another one but if you lose your friend you can’t.

Evy: I agree with Kathleen and I think stealing is wrong.

Saoirse: I think stealing is wrong because if you steal something all you get is a guilty conscience about the thing which you stole. But if you earned the money to buy that thing you know that you earned the money to get it.

Mick: I agree with Brendan Barron because I think you would get on without them [the gang].

Kenneth: If your friend does it and you’re the one that quit on him.....[inaudible].

Con: Well I agree with Brendan Barron because if your friends do call you “chicken” well you would be able to get over it. you’d get used to them doing it and you won’t care any more. But if you stole something you wouldn’t be able to get over it. you wouldn’t.

Cian: I agree with Brendan and I disagree with Liam.

Stewart: I think that if you steal something you could live a hard life. The chances are that you, you don't still live a happy life.

Ms Lawless: Yea. I think friendship is more important and it's risked when you steal even if you're in a crowd and you join in. You do risk losing real friends. I wouldn't expect someone to trust me if I was stealing. Trust would be gone.

Brendan McArthur: I kind of agree and disagree with Stewart because the idea of stealing is that you don't have to work for it. You just said they could live a happy life if they did not steal. Most people, they wouldn't if they were getting a big thing like a tv or a bike. It would take them a while to work up to it and they wouldn't want to. And I agree with Kathleen.

Brendan Barron: Stealing is just a way, I think stealing is just lazy because you could work for the money and earn it just by taking a little bit longer but am like you wouldn't really get over it. Your friends are like, you couldn't buy friends or anything by being "cool". Friends are priceless but if they want to steal and then they start calling you a chicken well then you shouldn't like them any more.

T: Yea, I agree that stealing seems to be the easy way out. So what does it take sometimes not to? I wonder does it take something like having the courage to stand up to the gang, stand up to your friends, to do the right thing.

Anna: Even if my friends did steal I wouldn't.

Barry: I think like if you don't steal and other people are working to get that stuff it kind of screws up everything. You're just taking yourself away from the real world.

Eamon: I agree with Brendan because if they tell you to steal you shouldn't be their friend.

Fiachra: I agree with Eamon and Brendan.

Donald: I think first of all, I kind of now agree with Brendan and then but I wouldn't steal because when you steal something, your mind when you don't steal something it's kind of calm. But if you steal something it's all nervous and when somebody asks you if somebody said "Did you hear the knife in the shop is gone missing" you'd be there "Oh, I didn't know that". You'd be really nervous.

Sally: I agree with Jane because friendship is more valuable than stealing a knife.

Jacinta: I agree with Jane. You can't buy friendship but you can but a knife.

Jane: I disagree with Brendan McArthur. I saved for my bunk bed for a year and for my holiday. I still wanted the bunk bed after a year. If he saved up for the knife he'd be more proud and happier than he would be stealing it.

Kathleen: I disagree with Brendan McArthur because if you save up for something because you really want it, it would take a good while.....

Evy: If people work for it and someone steals it then they probably get blamed for it.

Aisling: I agree with Saoirse.

Mick: I agree with Kenneth because it's just like saying that if you're not going to get a job, say your friend got a job and.....the other guy stole it.

Kenneth: Just say you were with your friends and they say to you "I'm just gonna go to the shop to steal something", and you said "no" they could call you "chicken" or they could beat you.

Con: Yea, I think stealing is wrong. If your friends go down and they're going to steal and they're asking you if you want to come with them you really should say "no". It's really difficult now when you're doing this but you really should say "no". You have to try and build character to do this.

Cian: I agree with Con and Kenneth because stealing's wrong.

Stewart: If your friends tell you to steal something or else they won't be your friend, then your friends are putting a price on friendship.

Brendan McArthur: Everybody said that you could save up for it if you still want it but I really meant that like say, you're really impatient and like if it's something that might be sold out by the end of the week you wouldn't have time to save up for it.....if you had maybe a hundred you'd just go over and take it.

Brendan Barron: It's kind of hard to, stealing is the lazy way out and if you get caught you're in big trouble. And people work. People work to make those things. So you're taking away their pride.

T: Yes, I agree people work to make those things so you're taking away the fruits of someone's labour. I'm just wondering here if you stole something that wasn't any good to the owner and that owner didn't care about it anyway, would that make it okay to steal or less serious to steal.

Barry: I don't think it would matter what it was or how much it was worth. It's just what you've done so it doesn't matter like. You've stolen it.

Liam: I kind of disagree with Brendan because you're not really taking away their pride. You're taking away your own pride.

Eamon: I disagree with Jane because you have to save up for the thing you need because you're not going to steal a bunk bed.

Fiachra: I agree with Eamon. You couldn't just go out of the shop with a bunk bed in your pocket.

Donald: I agree with Barry because like it doesn't matter. You could be stealing a little bush that's dead. You'd still have a guilty conscience.

Jacinta: I agree with Eamon because you can't actually steal a bunk bed without getting caught.

Jane: I disagree with Eamon and Jacinta. I didn't actually say that I did steal a bunk bed. I said that stealing wouldn't be worth it. In saving for my bunk bed when I got it I was happy. I said when you steal a knife it wouldn't be very valuable to you. If you stole it, it wouldn't be yours. It would still be theirs.

Clodagh M: I think it would still matter if you stole something and the owner didn't want it because the owner might not mind. But if your friends found out that you stole something they'd mind.

Kathleen: I think it does matter if you stole something and the owner didn't mind. It would still be stealing.

Mick: I agree with Fiachra because how could you fit a bunk bed in your pocket and how could you walk out of the shop without the alarm going off.

Con: Well, I think if you steal something that's really small and it's not really worth anything that's just being mean and the person's not going to need it at all. That's just being very lazy because if they're not going to need it at all and you just ask them for it they'll probably give it to you if they're not going to need it at all. Stealing it, now that's just real lazy.

Cian: I agree with Con. I know one thing that's not dear without anybody caring. If you stole like a penny sweet, it's only one sweet. They probably wouldn't ask you to pay for it.

Ms Lawless: I was thinking there about getting away with it. If you're going to be asked did you take something, whether it's valuable or not valuable you're asked a straight question. Did you take it? Did you see it? To get away with it I think you have to lie and I ask myself: How would I feel about myself after lying? And before I lied? And I think that would affect how I would feel about myself.

Brendan McArthur: I disagree with Cian because even if it's small like and you took it, it wouldn't be lazy. It would actually be stupid because if you stole food or something or loads of sweets they'd be gone in a few days. But then if they catch you they might make you work there for maybe a week or so.

Brendan Barron: That's good because you're taking away their pride as well as your own because think of the people who really worked hard to make that and think how you'd feel with your guilty conscience like forever.

T: Yea, I agree you'd probably have a guilty conscience if you took something that belonged to another person. I wonder then if you stole it from a thief. It doesn't belong to him. He's not going to come saying "That was mine". If you stole it from a thief would it be okay?

Barry: I think it's kind of boring to steal because if I wanted something like a bike and instead of getting a job and saving up for it, I stole it. It wouldn't mean as much to me as it would if I had all the money for it.

Liam: Well, I kind of disagree with Brendan Barron. The people in the factory just press a button on a machine and it's done. It's in the packet and all done. So it doesn't really take them hours and hours to do it.

Caoimhe: I agree with Liam.

Fiachra: I agree with Liam because it's just a factory and they.....[inaudible]

Donald: I think it's bad to steal it because like if you stole something like that was valuable, a bike or something, if the guards caught you like and they let you off, you'd have no friends. You wouldn't have a good reputation.

Sally: I agree with Liam.

Grace: If I wanted something I'd better go out and.....or something but I wouldn't steal it.

Clodagh M: I don't think you should steal. No matter how small a thing it is, it's wrong.

Kathleen: I agree with Grace because if you steal it's not really yours but if you wait and get it yourself then it's yours.

T: We've done several rounds now. This time for the last ten minutes now you can put up your hand. Evy will start and she'll pick a speaker, maybe someone who didn't speak so much.

Evy: I know that they press a button but how long does it take by the time you see it?

Saoirse: I think stealing is wrong because if your friends are doing it and they say you should do it too, well I don't think you should even if they're not your friends any more. It shows that they're not real friends.

Kenneth: I disagree with Evy and I agree with Liam because the machine would go a lot faster than a person making it by hand.

Cian: I agree with Clodagh because even if your friends tell you you're "chicken" and stuff you shouldn't do it.

Brendan Barron: It's different because think how long it took Bill Gates to make his first computer.

A voice: Who's Bill Gates?

Liam: Oh my God! Microsoft!

Brendan Barron: He's the guy who made Microsoft and say if you stole his idea and you stole all his microchips and stuff how would you feel?

Fiachra: Some shops are stealers because they rip you off.....When you buy them [toys] for a really expensive price they break in two seconds.

Liam: Evy, we weren't talking about robbing machines. We're talking about a packet of sweets and Bill Gates had machines to make computers.

Boy: He didn't invent the computer though.

T: Can I come in here. Before we leave Bill Gates you might think about this: Is it alright to steal an idea? Is that stealing?

Barry: Your friends can call you "chicken" or beat you up, they're not really your friends. It is wrong to steal an idea. They've worked a long time on this idea or else they thought of it straight away and have worked out how to use it.

Eamon: I agree with Fiachra because when I went into a shop I went to buy this racing car and it said £20 on it. Then they charged me £25 and said there was something wrong with it.

Donald: I disagree with Evy because you'd only have to make something by hand if you're in the 1980s or 1970s or before 1990. We're in the modern age. We've got TVs, radios and play-stations, computers. We've got all these rocket scientists, gadgets and all.

T: And what? What's the point you're making Donald?

Donald: I disagree with Evy. [Laughter]

Kenneth: If you robbed something you'd have to think of the alarm.....

T: We're rambling off the point now. Is it right to steal?

Brendan Barron: When you steal something from a shop it might have cost a lot of money to make that thing. It would be just like stealing lots of money even if it was a piece of junk that you wouldn't use. You could sell it. It's just taking the easy way out.

Fred: I disagree with Evy because they're not.....On my road a young fellow stole a packet of sweets and the shop-keeper saw him.

Cian: I disagree with Clodagh because who would care if you stole a penny sweet?

All: She never said that.

Cian: She said if you stole anything big or small. What's wrong with stealing a penny sweet?

Liam: It still cost a penny.

Cian: How long would it take you to save up for that?

Stewart: They're [those who steal] going to be upset. They're going to be feeling the guilt when they think about it.

T: I'm going to turn off the tape now. Would anyone take up Cian's point. The fact that the sweet is small, does that make it okay to steal? Is the amount or the size that makes it wrong? The last word is from Con then.

Con: Well, if you're stealing it from the shop or something then it's not going to be easy because you're stealing it from someone who owns it. But if you found it like on the street or something now and you stole it, it wouldn't really be any point either because you're not going to eat it if it's on the street. And it's just lazy stealing a penny sweet because how long is it going to take you to save up for that? It won't take you any time to save up.

END

Transcript 46 (6th class): Are girls better off in single-sex schools for their secondary education?

To begin the discussion I read the following:

Are girls better off in single-sex schools for their secondary education?

A lot of experts tell us that around the age of 11 or 12, girls begin to feel self-conscious about how they look and how they appear to others. An American expert, Carol Gilligan, says that girls “lose their voices” at this age. They become fearful of expressing an opinion in case they appear foolish or not “cool”, not only in front of boys but also in the presence of other girls. What do you think?

Ms Russell: Are girls better off in a single-sex school where they are able to and are not afraid to express an opinion? Do boys inhibit you or is it your peers?

Evy: I think they do because boys are like mean to girls. They slag them sometimes. If you fancy a boy you must look nice in front of him but if you were in another school [an all-girls' school] you wouldn't have to look, ah well, you'd concentrate on your study.

Grace: I agree with Evy because that would actually happen in some schools.

Ms Russell: I wonder does it happen in this class. I know when I had you in 2nd class some of you were very talkative and said a lot but by the time you've come to 6th class you've gone very quiet and I'm wondering why.

Sally Sm.: When I was in 2nd class, everyone was just, there was no messing and it was very strict. In an all-girls school it's better for their education.

Caoimhe O: Yea, in our class it is kind of embarrassing to talk. You'd probably talk more in an all-girls school.

Jacinta: I think when you're expressing your opinion in our class they think you're stupid and you get laughed at by boys and you get all embarrassed and it stops you from talking at all.

Jane: It really depends on who the girls are because if you say something stupid the girls tell you it's no good. If you say something to your best friend they're going to say nothing. They're just going to say “Oh that's alright” or something like that. I half agree with Evy sometimes. In girls schools you do want to look your best. Girls do like to put make-up on.

Clodagh: I agree with Evy.

Grace: I agree with Jane.

Ms Russell: Why do you agree with her? What do you think?

Grace: Because if you're in a girls school you might want to like being better looking than other girls.

Caoimhe M: I agree with whoever said that they're afraid to talk in our class because they'd feel self-conscious about what they said. If they made a mistake most of the people in the class would laugh at you and you would get all embarrassed.

Ms Russell: I wonder who would you be afraid most of laughing at you, the boys or is it the girls? If you had girls only would you be afraid of being laughed at? I'm just wondering.

Sally Sm: No. I think if you're in a, if it's just girls you don't mind saying something stupid because they're not going to laugh at you but if it's boys they will.

Caoimhe O: Yea, but girls do sometimes. If you're going to Secondary, they'll all be still laughing at you. I don't think it's a real difference.

Jane: I think if, the only reason I'm not going to a girls' school is girls not only laugh at you in front of your face, they talk about you behind your back and that's worse than laughing at you. If you're in a girls' school and if you had a best friend you can stick with your friends. The other girls would get in a group and go against you.

Ms Russell: Clodagh, are you happy in the group? Say something now. We're not laughing at you. We're laughing with you.

Evy: I would prefer to go to an all-girls school and I am. I don't like male teachers because if I had a girl's problem, if you had a boy teacher you wouldn't be able to tell him.

Caoimhe M: Evy, there is men teachers in Sxxxxxx [Laughter]

Ms Russell: So, is that what stops girls from expressing their opinion, a fear of looking foolish is it? Is it your physical appearance, how you look, if you're fat or thin or is it that you're afraid that what you say is going to be foolish?

Jacinta: I think when you're in a mixed school you'd still be slagged by boys and all over your fatness or your skinniness. Some people in an all-girls school would still be the same. So like, some people don't care what they look like but others want to be all pretty and all. You don't make up going to an all-girls school. Girls don't mind but when you go in there is some people - - - and they go against you.

Evy: When you go into an all-girls school and when you like start off you feel like you've been in, but after a while sometimes people bully you and things like that.

Saoirse: Wherever you are you're going to get bullied and most likely you're going to get bullied by boys because it's like their nature. But like, when you're in an all-girls school, if you have a best friend they'd stick by you and they'd stand up for you. After a while they will slag you and they'll go behind your back and talk but they won't say it to your face - -

- If you're in a mixed school you're more likely to get slagged by the boys because they have to live up to, they'd have to keep up their

Evy: reputation

Saoirse: Yea, their reputation going with the other boys. If they don't slag you you'll be a goody-goody and stuff. But girls, it depends on the girls.

Caoimhe O: I wanted to go to a girls' school because I didn't want the boys to slag me.

Ms Russell: You'd be afraid of being slagged by the boys and it would stop you from giving an opinion, would it?

Caoimhe O: Yea.

Ms Russell: And is that why you don't give an opinion usually [in Thinking Time]?

Caoimhe O.: Yea, most of the time I can't think of anything to say.

Ms Russell: Well now you've said it, so well done!

Ms Russell: Well I've noticed in your class that the boys aren't afraid at all of how they look. Maybe they are, maybe that's why they talk. As Saoirse said they want to keep up their reputation in front of each other. But the boys are always confident in their opinion. Whether it's a good opinion or not they give it and the girls always stay quiet. The girls seem to be worried about what the boys think but the boys don't seem to worry about what the girls think.

Sally Sm: I think in a girls' school there's more bitchiness and fighting.

Caoimhe O: I think in a mixed school, I think they're both the same. In a mixed school, just because the boys are just younger, but when they get a bit older, they just mature and stop it. But in a girls' school people mature as well. It's just their age.

Jane: I agree with Saoirse because You don't pay attention to boys. It's just their nature, as Saoirse says. Boys won't go off and talk about "that girl", what she did because they don't bother. But girls, they do. They go behind your back and they talk about "that girl".

Clodagh: I agree with Sally.

Caoimhe M: I think half the reason why boys bully girls is because some other boys might think that they're brave. And when someone new would come into the school they'd take on them but they wouldn't be so into bullying. But then they'd kind of feel that they'd have to bully to stay in their group.

Ms Russell: So are boys and girls basically different when it comes to friendship? Do boys not back-stab each other at all? Is it only girls who do that?

Sally Sm: In Sxxxxx, every month there's a girl, if anyone is bully you, you can go to a teacher and sort out the bullying. I think you should have that in every school.

Caoimhe O: Yea, boys aren't afraid to like, they just speak about what they think to others. But like girls, they're more quiet. They just say it to their friends.

Jacinta: Girls would probably, they'd slag others more than getting in a fight with them. Boys don't really slag. They just have to have fights.

Jane: You should have a friend in every school. Boys don't talk in their group because they're all friends. They express what they feel in a fight. But like girls are just talking among themselves. They'd call names behind your back and that's the difference between boys and girls.

Evy: I agree with Jane because like the girls in this school, they wouldn't like kill you or beat you up, just slugging. But the boys push you around and stuff. In mixed schools, the boys just kill each other. The girls just, they would slag each other. They wouldn't start a fight because they're afraid they might get in trouble but the boys wouldn't care. The boys couldn't care less. They just kill each other.

Caoimhe M: Like Evy was saying, if you fancy a boy you'd try to look good in front of him. That would take you away from, you'd concentrate on them more than anything and you kind of, your education would go down a bit because you wouldn't be listening to what the teacher would be saying. You'd just be listening to that boy.

Saoirse: I think that boys only like to kill each other because they want to be, yea, they want to live up to their reputation because I heard a few boys talking here and they were saying: "Oh I think I'm the boldest in the class because I've got in trouble this many times and I got sent to Mr X's office this many times. And I slag this many girls and I like to do this. They're just stupid.

Anna: I agree with Saoirse.

Ms Russell: Yea, that's interesting what you said there Saoirse. They've a different way of, they're proud of getting into trouble. What you were saying there is what the experts say, that some girls don't do well in mixed schools because they're more concerned about how they look in front of the boys rather than concentrating on their studies. So I wonder how many of you are going to go to mixed schools [for secondary school education].

Sally Sm: I'm going to Sxxxxx. I want to go there. I think in a mixed school there's more bullying and in Sxxxxx you're not allowed to bully. You'd get detention.

Caoimhe O: Yea, in Sxxxxx even though there's no bullying, they still do it after school. And if you say anything they just get you again and no one really tells on you.

Jacinta: I'm going to Gxxxxx which is a mixed school. I probably prefer to go to that because there's bitching between girls and all. If you're going to a mixed school the boys wouldn't bully you as much as the girls. They probably wouldn't start it that much at all, just say names. You'd probably get a better education in an all-girls school.

Jane: I'm going to Gxxxxx. If you were putting on make-up sometimes the boys won't pay any attention to you even if you do that. If I put on make-up to impress a boy and he didn't pay any attention, I wouldn't care. I'd get on with my study.

Evy: I agree with Jane because in an all-girls school like, they don't care which way they go in. I saw a girl going and her hair was out like this. They don't brush their hair or anything because there's no boys in the school to impress. But in a mixed school you see these girls going in with big hoops and make-up on their faces and their hair nicely done. It's crazy. They just want to impress the boys.

Grace: I'm glad I'm going to Nxxxxx because my mam wants me to go to Mxxxxx. It's very big and I prefer Nxxxxx.

Caoimhe M: I prefer to go to another mixed school like Nxxxxx, which I am. But I think that after you finish a conversation with someone like this when speaking out, you might have a bit more confidence to express your opinion in a mixed school afterwards.

Saoirse: I disagree with Evy because in Sxxxxx you see them going in with loads of make-up on and the big hoops and everything. You see them at the bus stop waiting.

Evy: Boys can see them then you see.

Saoirse: But they still put on make-up and stuff and in Nxxxxx they do as well. I think that girls, they prefer to look nice. In Santa Sabina you're still going to get slagged because girls don't physically beat you. But they - - - you're hurt because your feelings are hurt more. You get over being bullied in a mixed school. I'd say that mixed schools are better.

Anna: I agree with Saoirse.

Ms Russell: Is it only for the boys that people put on make-up or do girls want to look nice for their own sake, look beautiful for yourself? And are girls more cruel to each other than boys would be to them?

Sally Sm: I put on make-up and stuff. It isn't to impress the boys. It's just to look nice. I don't think there's any point because no matter what you look like, you're not going to be liked because you have make-up on - - -. I think that's stupid judging people by what they look like.

Jacinta: I think girls would bully each other more than boys would bully because girls are more vicious and slagging and all. They just keep slagging you and all. If girls did fight they wouldn't talk for a few weeks or something. But boys they'd have a fight one day and they'd probably be friends the next.

Jane: I agree with Jacinta and Saoirse. I had a fight with this boy on my road and the next day he came up to my house and told me he was sorry. And I thought that was really nice. But if I had a fight with a girl it would go on for weeks and weeks. I'd want to go up and say "sorry", but if I went they'd probably walk away or run away - and girls do want to look nice even if it's an all-girls school.

Clodagh: I agree with Sally.

Evy: Boys in our class only like girls with am, am, I can't say it.

Ms Russell: You can say it if you like.

All: [Laughter]

Evy: Boobies!

Ms Russell [laughing]: That's natural!

Evy: I know because they don't like me. They like boobies and I'm straight. Everyone always slags me because of that. If you were in an all-girls school they will kind of still slag you. I agree with Jacinta because in a mixed school they would put more make-up on to impress the boys. Some girls might put it on just for fun like if they want to look nice. But why do they want to look nice? Boys! [laughter]. In an all-girls school there's loads of bitching going on and they're all fighting. I agree with Jane. The fights, they go on for ages and ages until somebody says "sorry". If the boys have a fight, next day they're friends.

Caoimhe M: I think girls are more cruel mentally than physically because I think they prefer to hurt people's feelings than actually hurt them [physically].

Saoirse: I think girls put on make-up to give themselves more confidence as well.

Ms Russell: Would you really say what you think all the time even with other girls or would you be afraid of saying what you really think and feel with other girls?

Sally Sm: I would. Say if there were boys around I wouldn't in case they'd call me "stupid". I agree with Evy and Jane as well because loads of people around here are smoking. I think it's horrible. Most of them do it to impress boys and the boys might think they're nice because they smoke and wear make-up.

Jacinta: I agree with Sally Smith because some girls, not all girls, some girls go away and start drinking and smoking and looking gorgeous all around boys. They do all that and then

think it's cool to do that and then they'll [the boys] like them. If they do homework they'll slag them and they wouldn't go out with them then. But if they look gorgeous and smoke and drink they would.

Jane: My mam told me to say what I think and if everybody else says one thing it doesn't mean I have to. I have to say what I think.

Clodagh: I agree with Jacinta and Sally.

Evy: Yea, I agree with Jacinta because if somebody says "Oh I love that thing" and I don't really like it, I would just say it because they'd think I'm weird because I didn't like it or something. Yea, my mam told me to say what I think instead of other people lead you, say what they say, do what they do. Just do your own thing.

Grace: I know a girl down in Wexford and she's fifteen and she's smoking and drinking since she was like ten and she goes out with all her sister's friends. They don't go out with her because of her looks. They go out with her because she has a helicopter, a boat and all. They don't like her for her looks. They like her for her money.

Caoimhe M: Well, I'd be afraid to express my opinion normally in front of girls and boys, if I was only with girls and boys. You'd just think that you'd feel stupid if you said the wrong thing. They'd all laugh at you and be mean to you for a while until they went over to you and said "Sorry, we didn't mean to laugh at you. We thought it was a joke or something".

Saoirse: I think that am, it depends on the type of girls, like here. I'm not really scared to express my opinion here because there's no girls here who'd go off and slag you. But like in front of boys they would. And I'd say that most girls, depending on the girls that they're with, they'll slag you. Does that make sense to you?

Ms Russell: Yes, that does make sense. Is it a big risk then to say what you think because of what could happen to you? You'd be excluded and laughed at. Is it a big risk to say what you think even with girls your own age?

Sally Sm: I have this friend since when I was four. She moved in from Stillorgan and she moved to England and she came back two years ago. She's thirteen and she asked me did I want to go to town with her and her friends and I said "Yea" because they're a lot older. She was smoking and I never thought she'd do anything like that. She was always smoking because she liked boys and they liked her and she smoked and drank with them and that's why they like her. And she told me not to tell anyone so I can't. Then her mam came down and she was grounded for a few months. Her mam might be sending her to a boarding school because her mam has five other kids and she can't mind her because she's done it a few times, came in drunk.

Caoimhe O: I don't think it's a big risk to say what I think but I feel more comfortable among girls.

Jacinta: Sometimes I'm afraid to express my opinion because like if you're doing a picture in class or drawing they start slagging you: "You're stupid, can't draw" and you're afraid to ask them how to make a different picture because they might actually slag you over it.

Jane: It depends how close you are to them people. If you're really good friends, well then it's not a risk to take, but if they're not they'll go off and say things about you.

Clodagh: I agree with Caoimhe.

Ms Russell: How do you know then whether your friends really value you for yourself or whether they're after you because you have something they want. You drink with them. You smoke with them. How do you know they really value you for what you are in yourself?

Sally Sm: Well, I would never smoke and drink but some of my friends do. If I found that they were I'd let them. If they - for something that I had I wouldn't really. That's what some friends do with other people because they have money. One of my friends got a new go-cart and then everyone wanted to play with him and then the next week no one wanted to even play with him.

Jacinta: There's a girl I know on my road, covers herself in make-up and she smokes and drinks and all, all short skirts and all and stopped doing all work. She did that because of the boys and she thinks they all like her and all. But like some of them don't. She has asthma and she smokes. She comes home and she's always coughing and she's sick sometimes.

Jane: If you want to know if people liked you for what you are, if you wouldn't smoke or you wouldn't drink and if they didn't hang around with you because you didn't smoke or drink or didn't wear make-up. Well that really says they're not really your friends - - -

Clodagh: I agree with Jane.

Evy: Yea. A girl who used to be a nice girl called Robin, she smokes. It's crazy because they only do it for boys. Like Jane said, they only do it for boys. If there's no boys in the world, I know you wouldn't be able to have babies, but girls would get a lot better and stuff [giggling].

Caoimhe M: I agree with Jane, to put them to the test - - - If you didn't drink or smoke or wear make-up and wear short skirts for them you should just, it would stop to see if they were your true friends.

Saoirse: I don't think all girls smoke and drink because of boys. Some because like, their parents smoke and drink and do all that sort of stuff. I think sometimes they think that that's right so they should do it.

Anna: I agree with Saoirse.

Ms Russell: If you only do things like that just to impress others, does it make you feel false?

Sally Sm: Some people, well they've been taught not to smoke and drink. Their mother and father smoke - - - - they're always coughing.

Caoimhe O: A lot of girls don't just put make-up on to impress the boys all the time or drink and all. Sometimes they just want to look good or feel better.

Jacinta: I agree with Saoirse and Caoimhe because some girls are raised in families like that and some try to impress boys.

Jane: I agree with Jacinta. It's the area you grow up in. Like I'd see myself and if they didn't take me for who I was, well then they're not really your friends. You just be yourself.

Evy: Well some girls, I know they probably put make-up on but they don't smoke and drink for boys. They just do it to feel confident in themselves, like Caoimhe said. I saw these girls and they had make-up on and they saw these boys and they were pulling up their skirts and getting their hair [starts to run fingers through hair] and the boys started walking over to them. So like, if they had been normal people - - - - the boys wouldn't have come over to them.

Grace: I don't see the point in smoking to impress boys. While you're smoking you're affecting your health. If you want to spend time [smoking] you won't be enjoying yourself because your health will be affected.

Caoimhe M: I think people want the boys to pay attention to them, or they don't smoke or they don't drink. If they don't really want the boys to pay attention to them, well they'll put make-up on anyway. They probably want to feel confident in themselves.

Sally Sm: If I was a boy I think I'd prefer to hang around with girls who don't smoke. I don't know why girls smoke and drink just because they want the boys like.

Caoimhe O: There's some boys who just don't like girls for who they are. Even if my brother sees someone they don't have to be all dressed up. He still likes them even with make-up.

Jacinta: I agree with Grace and Jane because like if you start smoking and drinking for a boy, you're risking your health and your future because in the future if you're having a baby, drugs, drink and smokes could affect your child and all.

Jane: I agree with Jacinta. If you're smoking to impress a boy, well then that's not going to really help you in the future because you're damaging yourself and that boy is not going to

be with you. You could probably marry him or something and like Jacinta said if you want to have a baby that mightn't - - - - -[inaudible]

Sally Sm: How many of you would smoke just like to impress a boy? Or drink? If the boy you like and he smokes and drinks, would you just start smoking and drinking like, just for one boy?

Caoimhe O: No, I wouldn't. If I wanted to do it I would. I wouldn't just do it for a boy. If they didn't like me the way I am, I just wouldn't be with them.

Jacinta: I don't think you should smoke or drink for a fella' because if he's just going after your looks and all. And then you're going out with each other, he'll just dump you and go with someone else who's nicer looking because he's not going for like your intelligence.

Grace: None of my friends smoke. There's no need to because if they had the pressure of boys and stuff and the boys put a pressure - - - - [inaudible]

[I am beginning to feel that the topic is exhausted but since many of these girls have been reluctant to speak in other sessions I allow the topic to drift on and let the girls have their say]

Caoimhe M: I don't like wearing make-up or smoking or drinking or anything. If a boy asks you out you should just be yourselves and let them know to make sure of your decision.

Saoirse: Girls who do all that stuff for boys, I think they have no, they don't care about themselves. They care more about other people than they do about themselves.

Evy: I think girls who do that are stupid in a way. Like who'd want to do that to themselves? I want to be alive when I'm seventy-five [laughter in the group]

Ms Russell: Is that it then? Is there anyone?

Evy: People who smoke and drink. They die about seventy. They die really young. If they had children, the children would want the mummies and daddies to grow older and older, to live longer.

Sally Sm: My dad smokes. I don't like him smoking. Sometimes I'm afraid in case he might, my best friend – his dad smokes and he died two years ago of cancer. My dad smokes and I do be afraid that he'll get cancer.

Jacinta: My mam smokes. She used to and then she went off them for two years. Then when stress came along she went back on them and all and like as Sally said - - - My mam's best friend's husband died of drinking and smoking.

Ms Russell (about to round up but Evy insists): Very short and to the point.

Evy: My dad smokes. I'm still afraid that he's gonna die.

Grace: My dad used to smoke 60 – 80 cigarettes a day and he made himself give up four years ago. And he's disgusted when people smoke. My neighbour died two years ago. He was only fifty-one. He never smoked and he never drank in his life.

Saoirse: My mam and Larry smoke and they'd smoke a packet and a half a day. Larry, he's been trying to stop and my mam won't stop. The living room gets really smoky. We're moving to Spain, so when we've got all the pictures over in Spain there's this big patch on the wall. All the wall is grey from all the smoke. We always have to go upstairs because I don't want to be there.

Ms Russell (rounding up while others insist on speaking): Is it a story about smoking? I think we have enough stories about smoking now. [The tape is running out]

END