

Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp: Philosophy for Children's Educational Revolution, by Roberto Franzini Tibaldeo (2023), Springer, Switzerland.

In *Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp: Philosophy for Children's Educational Revolution*, Roberto Tibaldeo sets himself the task of introducing the reader to the history, ideas and practice of Philosophy for Children (P4C) as developed by Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp. The book fills a gap in the literature on the origin and development of P4C whereby Tibaldeo presents this development as an 'educational revolution', created by Lipman and Sharp's 'philosophical-educational vision'.

Recently, several publications have given readers access to a wide variety of articles by Lipman and Sharp (see Gregory & Lavery 2018; Naji & Hashim 2017), to which a volume on Gareth Matthews has been added (see Gregory & Lavery 2021). These contribute to the dissemination of their ideas and are useful as an introduction for teachers, educators, philosophers, or parents who are new to P4C. Meanwhile, there is a whole generation of practitioners and researchers—I also belong to them—who never met Lipman, Sharp or Matthews in person. All this generation knows comes from the memories and publications of their collaborators and students; mostly people they inspired at training workshops in Mendham and at the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC).

Instead of offering a compilation of reprints of texts with commentaries from various scholars or interviews with Lipman and Sharp, Tibaldeo aims at a unifying account of the development of P4C. This is a challenging task, as those within the community who still remember Lipman and Sharp will be judging the way he presents their ideas and how he integrates these ideas into one shared 'vision'. Yet Tibaldeo has the advantage of being more objective, since he had no in-person contact with Lipman and Sharp (other than sending Lipman an email and, in exchange, receiving a copy of an article).

For those readers who are already acquainted with the history of IAPC and Lipman and Sharp's ideas, Tibaldeo's book may not contain many revelations, but while reading they may feel challenged to compare their own memories and their own story of what was and still is special about P4C with Tibaldeo's version of Lipman and Sharp's 'philosophical-educational vision'.

Chapter 1 introduces us to Lipman and Sharp's autobiographies. Tibaldeo chooses relevant moments from their lives which influenced the development of their ideas

and the establishment of the IAPC, like teaching a course on Contemporary Civilization at Columbia University College (Lipman) or being a house parent to thirteen teenagers with various degrees of mental problems (Sharp). A limitation is that this story is based on their own, subjective accounts. The reader would have liked to see some reference to letters, diaries, or other sources, followed by a critical analysis. Nevertheless, having finished this chapter, the reader will be convinced that nowadays we should speak and write about 'the Lipman–Sharp program'. Importantly, Tibaldeo explains the reasons why Sharp's contribution has been overlooked for so long. Personally, I would have appreciated it if the story about the development had been completed with a description and critical analysis of Lipman and Sharp's cooperation with Frederick S Oscanyan and Gareth Matthews.

Chapter 2 provides the 'Context of Lipman and Sharp's Educational Revolution'. This makes sense, as probably most readers of the book, like my generation, will not remember the socio-political situation of the 60s and 70s, especially in the US. It is a short chapter, which leaves the reader wishing for a comparison with other educational renewal initiatives in these decades: what do they have in common and what distinguishes them from each other? Tibaldeo sketches Lipman and Sharp's response to the challenges of American society and education. He also covers some of the more general discussions in education, such as the relevance of 'critical thinking' and 'higher-order thinking', and the role of philosophy in education. These sketches provide a useful guide to the novice, but some concepts require a more thorough analysis, like the idea that students should learn to 'think for themselves'. Tibaldeo repeats the claim that it was Dewey's idea to use philosophy for the development of 'reasoning competencies' of students. This may be true for the US, but in Europe one may for example point at the Austria-Hungary curriculum (dating back to the middle of the 19th century), which introduced a 'Propaedeutics of Philosophy' for precollege education (see Grądzka & Polak, 2024). In this propaedeutics, teaching logic was central. It also seems that the significance of Justus Buchler's work in Lipman's development of thinking is more important than previously has been thought (see Gregory 2024).

In Chapter 4, we are introduced to the historical development of the IAPC curriculum, method, and teacher training model. Tibaldeo skillfully tells the challenging story of the most significant breakthrough by Lipman: writing the philosophical novel *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery*, 'a different genre altogether'. The novel is not so much a 'stimulus', as nowadays selected texts, books or pictures are called, but rather a detailed and highly original description of the model of a classroom community of inquiry. Fortunately, all novels, manuals and resources have recently become

available in open access on the IAPC website. Tibaldeo observes a significant change in the curriculum publications, namely a switch from adolescents (*Harry, Mark, and Lisa*) to younger children as protagonists and readers (*Pixie, Kio & Gus, Nous, Elfie*). The richness and quality of the teachers' manuals which accompany the novels are only briefly mentioned, although some (like Pieter Mostert) consider these manuals to be the most valuable part of the heritage of the IAPC curriculum.

What struck me was that Tibaldeo, who in the previous chapters was very fair with highlighting Sharp's contribution, does not mention her novels in this chapter. It made me wonder about the relation of Sharp's novels to the IAPC curriculum. In Chapter 1, he states, 'Lipman would write the novels, while Sharp would develop the instructional manual' (Tibaldeo 2023, p. 10, citing Lipman 2008, pp. 132–133). However, on the same page, he writes (citing Lipman 2010, p. 17), 'it was Sharp who generally provided Lipman with the specific "aspect of human experience" to be developed in each novelistic chapter' (Tibaldeo 2023, p. 10). The most novel part of the book is where Tibaldeo refers to a still unpublished article by Sharp about the possibility of evaluation of a P4C session ('Can we Evaluate a Philosophy for Children Session'). I appreciate this reference to an unpublished source for shedding more light on the method and Sharp's contribution. I also appreciate the reference to Philip Guin's text that compares the IAPC's teacher training method to Schön's 'reflective practitioner' (Guin 1991; Schön 1982) which opened a new perspective for me. Chapter 4 also mentions the success of the empirical evaluation of the Lipman-Sharp P4C program and the need for evidence-based education. For the novice reader it would have been valuable to find a description and an evaluation of the different types of research that have been done like in Pieter Mostert's article (about this topic, see Mostert 2022).

Tibaldeo pays little attention to the criticism that the IAPC has faced over the course of time and how it has responded. Gregory (2011) devoted an interesting article to this topic:

The programme has attracted overlapping and conflicting criticism from religious and social conservatives who don't want children to question traditional values, from educational psychologists who believe certain kinds of thinking are beyond children of certain ages, from philosophers who define their discipline as theoretical and exegetical, from critical theorists who see the programme as politically compliant, and from postmodernists who see it as scientific and imperialist. (p. 199)

One criticism is Kitchener's (1990) strongly worded statement that P4C has

no clearly delineated notion of what doing philosophy is. In particular, doing philosophy is often confused with thinking critically. Furthermore, the behavioral criteria for doing philosophy (as distinct from doing critical thinking) are questionable on epistemological grounds; in addition, the empirical claims made by some proponents of the philosophy for children group are false. (p. 416)

Lipman responds with a comparison:

When children play sandlot baseball, they play it as skilfully as they can and they adhere to the rules of the game. That they follow the rules is sufficient to make them baseball players: they do not have to play game expertly. (1990, p. 432)

Chapter 5 briefly discusses the dissemination of P4C around the world. Tibaldeo claims that P4C was a success because of 'a favorable *Zeitgeist*', but concludes that Lipman-Sharp's program 'has somehow come to a dead end' and 'remains on the periphery in both present-day school systems and academic research (Mohr Lone, 2022).' (Tibaldeo 2023, p. 100) The reader longs to read more about this claim and the underlying reasons. What are the adverse and the beneficial factors (mainly in the educational context) that determine whether an initiative to introduce P4C will be successful and lasting, or not? All one reads is that this 'entails additional research which goes beyond the scope of this book' (Tibaldeo 2023, p. 100).

I found his remark that there always was and still is a variety of approaches to the relationship of children and philosophy and that this is not a 'unified field' more than just interesting. For novices in P4C, whether one is practitioner or researcher, it is one of the most prominent questions: is there a standard way of 'doing philosophy for children', or is this a myth?

Now, let's turn to Chapter 3, which is the main chapter of the book. When the other four chapters set the stage, Chapter 3 tells the story of what P4C is about. Tibaldeo provides a personal and original account of 'Lipman and Sharp's Philosophical-Educational Vision'. He intertwines the different strands of their thoughts presented in various publications and weaves them into one narrative. One feels how Lipman and Sharp work together, how it is their joint program, mission and ambition. The reader would have liked to see more of a conversation between them. They must have

differed on many points at many moments. When did they disagree? And how did they overcome this and continue their working together so closely and intensely?

Tibaldeo offers an analysis of what the concept of philosophy meant to both of them. Next, he tries to grasp what 'inside-out philosophy' means, what the qualities of the educational turn are that Lipman and Sharp proposed, and what it means for their 'normative' view of democracy and citizenship. Here, he shows the tension between intellectual autonomy and community-based philosophical inquiry. Next, he addresses the idea of a 'generative and personhood-oriented education', as postulated by Sharp. Here, the reader would have appreciated a more thorough analysis of the concepts of indoctrination, liberation and democracy.

In the last part of the chapter, Tibaldeo integrates the ideas related to critical, creative, and caring thinking, which nowadays are considered to be the core ideas of the Lipman-Sharp approach, into the idea of multidimensional thinking. In the introduction to the book, Tibaldeo mentions that the concept of the multidimensionality of thinking was the concept that brought him to P4C when he was dealing with environmental ethics issues back in 2002. For the reader, it would have been valuable to read in more detail about the historical development of this idea. It looks like a coherent vision over decades, but multidimensionality went through several changes. In Tibaldeo's version, it started from Dewey's 'reflective thinking' and then evolved 'due to the close interaction with the US educational context of the 1980s and the debate on 'higher-order thinking' (Tibaldeo 2023, p. 48). Reading Lipman's texts one by one we can observe a gradual evolution, for example in the statement of the aims of P4C in *Philosophy in the classroom* (Lipman et al. 1977, pp. 31–58; 1980, pp. 51–81) which eventually led to the desire to bring critical, creative and caring thinking together.

Tibaldeo does a great job of putting together the whole story of Lipman and Sharp's partnership and creation of the IAPC. His account makes a strong and convincing statement that this was a shared endeavour and not, as is often perceived, mainly Lipman's achievement. I wish I had had his book at hand when I started my PhD research because it would have saved me a lot of time figuring out who, what, and when. The book covers all the major concepts, issues and publications and, helpfully, it is clearly and accessibly written.

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