

Literature as machines for thinking

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Abstract

Literature, we argue, is about ‘meaning’ and not about ‘truth’. Most school subjects, including the humanities, are about truth-seeking and knowledge-building. Literature is different. A literary work is entirely fictional. It offers no knowledge in the usual sense of that word, but it offers a form of understanding because it engages with the world in an indirect way. It presents the reader with a dramatic but fictional narrative situation, in which fictional people, places and events instantiate social practices and engage with social and moral concepts. The reader is invited to grapple with both the particular situation and with the more general practices and concepts.

The study of literature in the classroom is thus best practised as a whole class discussion of the story and of the practices and the concepts embodied in it. In this way the study of literature resembles the study of philosophy, especially the study of social and moral philosophy. However, literature differs markedly from philosophy, because a literary work presents no arguments and makes no truth claims. It operates more at the level of particulars than generalities and abstractions, and we call this level of operation ‘dramatic instantiation’. Literature thus has a unique place in the school curriculum.

Philosophy, it is often said, teaches not what to think but how to think. Literature is even more minimal. It teaches neither what nor how to think. Instead, it offers materials about which to think. A literary work is a ‘machine for thinking’, as IA Richards put it. Good literature offers materials for thinking which have proven over time to be worth thinking about. The experience of such materials is uniquely valuable and a necessary part of any good education.

Key words

community of inquiry, literary humanism, Philosophy in Schools

Introduction

What value does literature have in the school curriculum? Why should students study literature? These are simple but difficult questions. We will argue that literary works are best thought of as ‘machines for thinking’, an idea which we borrow from IA Richards’ preface to his *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924/2004, p. 1). The best reason for studying literature is that literary works are forms of writing that provoke thought and understanding through indirect fictional description. Some such works provoke complex and sophisticated thought and understanding. The best students of literature are those who can respond to a literary work in the most thoughtful ways. This, we will contend, is what the teaching and study of literature should aim to cultivate.

The Philosophy in Schools (P4C) movement, as it has developed since about 1970, has always been committed to creative as well as critical thinking. The creative part of P4C values stories and story-telling as indispensable for children’s education. One central idea was to teach philosophy through stories. Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp wrote their own stories for just this purpose. Later followers did the same, notably Philip Cam and Gareth Matthews. Over time, these ‘thinking stories’ became less didactic than Lipman’s originals. This trend raised the question of how far P4C could and should go towards the inclusion of literary works with no didactic or philosophical intent in its repertoire. The question remains an open one, about which opinions may differ. Here we are examining the case for the teaching of philosophy through literature, or—to put it differently—the partial merging of ‘literature’ and ‘philosophy’ in the school curriculum.

As we see it, our view is nothing radical. We think we are articulating a mainstream point of view, one held by many or most good teachers past and present. Our aim is to sketch up a clear, coherent and plausible account of the value of literary study. Our purpose is to defend what we think of as a form of ‘literary humanism’. We think that this is a position undergoing a much-overdue revival amongst literary scholars and philosophers of literature. Our article, then, will also serve as a short introduction to this revival.

In summary, we will argue that literature has a distinctive and distinctively valuable role to play in the school curriculum. Literature presents ‘machines’—novels, short stories, plays, poems, perhaps films—that mimic life and invite a response from the reader in the form of discussion. Engagement in this process is educative. Its educational value is that it generates alertness to the debatable concepts and practices

that structure our lives. In this it is like philosophy. We will try to show how, because of this similarity, a philosophical pedagogy fits well with literary study.

Our interest here is not in just any works of fiction or poetry but in fiction or poetry that deserves the name 'literature'. It is an honorific term. A work of literature is a work that has proven over time to be worth reading and thinking about because it provokes an audience to raise pesky questions about its own moral, political, legal, aesthetic or intellectual commitments. It may disturb one to think in the ways prompted by a serious work of literature, or it may delight. But whatever the case it engages readers with ideas or concepts. And it provokes readers to discuss the rights or wrongs of living out certain ideas or concepts.

In developing this argument, we refer quite often to literature as promoting moral maturity in readers. We understand the term 'moral' very broadly, as encompassing social matters of justice, courage, honesty, wisdom, self-awareness and compassion. Of course, literature also develops aesthetic awareness, which we discuss only sparsely. In literature, we think, the boundary between the moral (in our broad sense) and the aesthetic is very fuzzy, especially in the understanding of style, which usually conveys both moral and aesthetic meanings. We say this at the outset to clarify our point of view.

Here we are interested in literature prescribed for school study. From their own mainstream secondary schooling in Australia, the authors recall such works as *Oedipus Rex*, *Julius Caesar*, *Henry IV*, *Great Expectations*, *Hedda Gabler*, *A Doll's House*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *Metamorphosis*, *Brave New World*, *Animal Farm*, *Lord of the Flies* and *The Collector*. Amongst poets, we recall Shakespeare, Blake, Wordsworth, Shelley, Tennyson, Hardy, Wilfred Owen, Eliot, DH Lawrence, Kenneth Slessor, Judith Wright, and AD Hope. It is works of this stature that we have in mind when we speak of literature. Of course, such works may include quite recent writings.

1. Humanism and ideology

The traditionally accepted reason why literature should be read and studied was that put by Matthew Arnold way back in 1869:

The whole scope of [this book] is to recommend culture as the great help out of our present difficulties; culture being a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world, and,

through this knowledge, turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits, which we now follow staunchly but mechanically ... (1869/1963, p. 6)

[T]he idea which culture sets before us of perfection,—an increased spiritual activity, having for its characters increased sweetness, increased light, increased life, increased sympathy,—is an idea which the new democracy needs far more than the idea of the blessedness of the franchise, or the wonderfulness of its own industrial performances. (1869/1963, p. 65)

These and similar sentiments provided the motivation for the introduction of literary study into the modern school curriculum. Matthew Arnold was Inspector of Schools for Great Britain. The rationale for the study of literature in schools is, Arnold tells us, that it helps us to cultivate our humanity.

Arnold's view is still a powerful one. Literature is seen as a civilising power because it is 'culture', something which the new democracy of his time needed far more than it needed its 'blessed franchise' or its 'industrial performance'. His view is repeated in a contemporary mode by Martha Nussbaum (1995). For her, literature nourishes and flexes our moral imagination and develops our sympathy and compassion. We learn to walk in other people's shoes. Reading literature provokes and challenges the values and attitudes readers and students hold. She refers extensively to Dickens' *Hard Times* (1995, pp. 13–72). Reading a novel such as this one can be morally educative, she contends.

[I]f we follow the story with eager attention, succumbing to its invitations and being moved by its people, then we are, in the process, making judgments—about the industrial revolution, about utilitarianism, about divorce law, about the education of children—confident in the process that some reasons are indeed stronger than others, that some ways of treating human beings are themselves better than others and can be justified as better by the giving of such reasons. (1995, p. 83)

We note the importance that the giving of reasons has in her account of this educative process. Later, we will suggest how this can be practised in the classroom.

Arnold and Nussbaum present a form of literary humanism that still has traction. It is, however, not the kind of literary humanism for which we will be arguing. It is a romantic humanism that suffers from various shortcomings. Firstly, it underestimates how literature is a multifarious and many-splendored thing. It can introduce us to characters who are unsympathetic, confused and misguided (think Don Quixote, King Lear, Emma Woodhouse, Pierre Bezuhov), amusing (Mister Pickwick, Algernon Moncrieff, J Alfred Prufrock, Svejik), feisty (Moll Flanders, Becky Sharp, Julien Sorel, Alice, Yossarion), and malevolent (Iago, Lady MacBeth, Sir Walter Eliot, Mrs Proudie, Big Brother, Humbert Humbert). Our reactions to such characters might broaden our moral imagination or they might not. But, just from the mention of these examples, it is far from obvious that an expansion of our sympathies is the main value of literary education.

Secondly, old literary humanism does not allow sufficiently for the power of serious literature to shed a critical light on the assumptions and received ideas brought to the act of reading by the reader and the student. Arnold's phrase, 'turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits', is a wonderful one. But what the reader or the student brings to this process, or what the student or reader does to cultivate moral imagination, is not explained. We think there has to be a story about what learning looks like in this part of the process. We will argue that the benefits of literature can be obtained only when students or readers wrestle with their ideas and emotions as they discuss the dramatic instantiation of morally charged concepts.

Our argument is in part a negative one. We are against narrow perspectives or positions and their associated reading practices. Since the 1970s, literature has been the subject of two kinds of critique. One kind subjects literature to an ideological analysis and critique from class, feminist, anti-racist and other perspectives. Another kind subjects it to a more general critique highlighting the slipperiness of meaning and meanings; a critique which tells against both conservative defences and radical ideological criticism of literary meaning-making.

The most common of these ideological positions concern themselves exclusively with the moral concepts of class, gender and race. They are reductive because they institute a narrow focus on some concepts and practices that structure our lives, and consequently develop only a narrow social understanding. We will not argue that these perspectives or positions be abandoned. In fact, they describe important features of human experience. We will argue that they need to be broadened to open up the

real value of literature. It is our position that there is much more to appreciating and understanding the human condition, as revealed through literature, than is encompassed by current ideological approaches to those three concepts.

In broad terms, the position we wish to advocate, which we take from Bernard Harrison (2014), we will refer to as 'new literary humanism'. It makes the following claims:

- Literature does not mirror or represent the world.
- Literature engages with meaning and not with truth.
- Meaning is a function of the ways in which our uses of words engage with the multitude of practices which characterise and constitute a certain social and moral order, or form of life, and hence with our concepts and patterns of assumption concerning, among other things, the nature of human reality as defined upon those practices.
- By deploying words in a richly and concretely imagined fictional context, and by thus bringing the concepts and assumptions evoked by their meanings into active engagement with that context, serious fiction is enabled to bring those concepts and assumptions before the bar of conscious critical scrutiny.
- The study of literature is hence, like philosophy, a form of conceptual inquiry.
- Like philosophy, the study of literature can both enrich our conceptual repertoire with more accurate conceptual distinctions and cleanse it of muddle and conceptual confusion.
- At the same time, it is different from philosophy in that it deals with narratives that instantiate concepts.
- It has practical value not only, as the earlier literary humanism suggests, by extending our sympathies and placing our habitual responses upon a sounder foundation, but also by subjecting those responses to the possibility of critical scrutiny and reasoned revision.

We will flesh out these claims in the remainder of the essay, adding to them a focus on the philosophical community of inquiry as an appropriate pedagogy for this new humanism.

2. Dramatic instantiation

Philosophy mainly works by argument, and so is normally very different from literature, but it sometimes employs philosophical narrative. Discussing the role of narrative in Philosophy for Children, Cam (2015) juxtaposes philosophical writing with philosophical narrative. He explains that 'Philosophical writing proceeds by addressing general problems' through question and argument, 'directed toward a conclusion', while 'A story ... involves characters drawn into a plot' heading toward 'some kind of resolution' (p. 42). This means 'The conclusion of a story is not a conclusion in the philosophical sense', namely 'a statement supported by reasoning and argument' (2015, p. 42). Instead, 'the philosophical narrative for children is an exploration of ideas' that 'opens up philosophical problems and issues and explores them just far enough to allow students to find their way into the discussion' (2015, p. 49). This is all uncontroversial, we think.

Literature, however, is more subtle and complex than philosophical narrative. We think it works mainly by what we call 'dramatic instantiation'. Literary narrative does not state explicitly that such and such is the case. Instead, it puts on show, like actors on a stage, the problematic world we inhabit. In Hamlet's words, literary narrative serves 'to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure' (*Hamlet*, Act III, scene ii; Shakespeare, 1963, p. 98). But literature does not make propositional claims about why it is so. If it were to do that, it would no longer be literature. It would be better to call it a work of philosophy with an inventive thought experiment to frame the case. Rather, literature presents a fictional world which at once both resembles and differs from actual life. In Viktor Shklovsky's terms, literature works by 'defamiliarization'. The defamiliar 'creates a vision of the object instead of serving as a means for knowing it' (1917, p. 5). At the same time, the fictional world operates with and addresses itself to our familiar world. Kafka's Gregor Samsa may wake up as a cockroach, but he also has a family not unlike that of the reader. It is the moral concept of 'family', particularly questions of one's duty in the face of change, that serves as a bridge between the literary and extra-literary worlds. Engagement with both the familiar and the 'defamiliarized' seeks to promote understanding, rather than to generate truth-claims.

The new type of humanism defined in the preceding section extends rather than rejects the earlier version exemplified in Arnold or Nussbaum. According to both, works of literature civilise by extending the range of the moral imagination, either by

extending our sympathies or our understanding of the basis of our habitual responses, or by alerting us to defects and incoherences in those habitual patterns of response. Again, this is uncontroversial. But we stress that what matters most to the success of the project in either direction is the pedagogy that stimulates thinking and structures discussion. Sympathy, if extended, is only extended by reflecting on the intricacies of a story. The philosophical community of inquiry in the literature classroom is ideally suited to this. To emphasise this aspect of literature teaching is to draw upon the work of John Dewey and Matthew Lipman. Referring to Dewey, Lipman (2006) writes that

Dewey was convinced that education had failed because it was guilty of a stupendous category mistake. It confused the refined, finished end products with the raw, crude initial subject matter of inquiry and tried to get students to learn the solutions rather than investigate the problems and engage in inquiry for themselves. Just as scientists apply scientific method to the exploration of problematic situations so students should do the same if they are ever to learn how to think. (p. 20)

The main value of studying literature is that it educates us in a certain way of thinking, a way that is not scientific or historical or philosophical but no less important than these sorts of thinking.

3. Machines for thinking

What sort of thinking is this? One common conception of literary study is that it teaches the interpretation of literary works. We will contend that this is a secondary aim of literary study. It is not the primary aim which, in our view, is to respond thoughtfully to those works.

The literature curriculum has three main components: textual analysis; the study of values and attitudes in stories; and its impact on the reader critically considered (derived from ACARA 2022). In the first component, students learn about plot, character, theme, style, tone, genre and other such literary concepts. In the second, students learn to see how values are embedded in stories. In the third, students engage in discussion about the relevance to them of the stories and their implicit values.

We agree that these three components are the core of literary study, but here we prioritise the third, namely the impact on the reader critically considered. By instantiating moral concepts in the context of richly imagined fictions, literature operates first on our imaginations, secondly on our conceptual repertoires, and finally

on our understanding, deepened or critical, of the social practices that structure our lives. Literature at its best is a form of critical social reflection in which the author provokes and arouses a response from the reader. And the natural mode for engaging with this in the classroom is the philosophical community of inquiry. It also forms the basis of our argument that time and space to think and study and converse in schools is crucial to developing understanding.

The key to the new humanist position is that, although all three components should be taught, priority should be given to the impact on the reader critically considered. The primary value of the study of literature is that it offers the opportunity for readers to reflect critically and to give a considered response, rather than an ideological response, to the values and attitudes studied.

Take, for example, William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. The novel is a wonderful example of the point we make. Stranded on a coral island, the boys are naturally compelled to recreate the social structures to which they are accustomed so that they may live safely until rescued. Humans are hard-wired to live in groups to secure peace, belonging, and a sense of purpose or meaningfulness in life. From this, Ralph states the obvious, 'Seems to me we ought to have a chief to decide things', and the group votes as a common way to decide an important decision (1954, pp. 23–24). This is a reasonable path that any group of human beings would naturally choose to follow in the same situation. It gives us an insight into our nature, especially when Ralph offers Jack the leadership of the choir as consolation for having lost the leadership ballot (1954, p. 24). His kind act secures the opposite of what he intends and is a great example of a moment in the plot worthy of moral evaluation. Should such an act be committed, and so on? From then on the story plunges us into the conceptual armature of politics in the human world and demands our critical consideration and response.

Lord of the Flies frames for our consideration the darker side of the political animal in human nature. It instantiates important moral concepts and is one machine for thinking about an essential aspect of human nature, human experience, and a resulting human condition.

Bernard Harrison's (2014) *What Is Fiction For?* makes a nice distinction between 'reactive criticism' and 'interpretive criticism' (pp. 291–337). Interpretive criticism has 'the movement of critical thought ... from the book to something beyond it' (p. 311), with the critic writing as a representative 'of some wider "cause"' (p. 314) and producing a reading that 'is always reductive' (p. 322). For instance, by unmasking yet

another instance of sinister hegemony in narrative, it shows how the unity of the text, by the dominant reading, continues oppression in the world.

Reactive criticism, or reactive critical inquiry, 'begins from something outside the book' and moves "'inward' to a concern with words of the text' (2014, p. 311). 'Reactive critics ... write as individual men and women ... primarily concerned with expressing a personal reaction to the text' rather than 'relating it to collective social or political concerns' (2014, p. 315). It is precisely through the response it yields, under critical scrutiny, to a personal reaction of this kind, that a literary text exercises the power that some such texts possess to cast doubt on the habitual assumptions that generally guide such a reaction.

Our first thoughts about a book always spring from our habitual, settled ways of thinking. The power of the book ... to inform or change him or her [the reader], is coterminous with its power to place objective obstacles in the path of those initial prejudgments. By doing so it invites the reader to look again at the practices and associated presumptions that we ordinarily take for granted—as unalterably inseparable from the living of whatever version of human life it is that we happen to lead in whatever human world we happen to inhabit—under the strange, oblique, uncanny light that a powerful contrary imagination can cast upon them. (Harrison 2014, p. 319)

Literature calls into question 'the shape of the human worlds that the practices in question serve to constitute' (2014, pp. 330–331). This may involve scrutinising the practices that create racial or gender or class oppression when it is a genuine concern in the narrative because it is an 'objective obstacle' placed in the path of the reader. It is a significant moment or event in the plot or the development of character that constitutes 'the bearings of the work' (2014, p. 307), like Ralph's foolhardy decision to give Jack power. This makes literature function 'not as a drug or source of consoling delusions, but as the instrument of personal and cultural self-knowledge and self-criticism that the humanist has always taken it to be' (2014, p. 331). Thus, literature 'is not some kind of message in a bottle, washed up on the shores of history', waiting to be deciphered by eager sages on ideological stools, carefully analysing appropriate ways to unify the text to their ends (2014, p. 331).

We think that the personal reaction to the text is crucial in cultivating critically considered responses and developing moral discernment in students. We think it is an enriching process of understanding dialectically the traps and pitfalls of human

nature. We think that cultivating moral discernment in this way best suits literature as a form of study and must underpin the critical response students consistently undertake in literature classrooms.

Harrison (2014) puts it this way:

What creative literature does for us is ... [to] ... bring the operations and functioning of the human world, both on the social and the individual level, before the bar of critical consciousness. (pp. 93–94).

The important point here, we think, is that literary study engages our critical consciousness to develop a considered position. In the classroom, students share these critical reflections with their peers. As Lipman contends:

[We want] students [to] listen to one another with respect, build on one another's ideas, challenge one another to supply reasons for otherwise unsupported opinions, assist each other in drawing inferences from what has been said, and seek to identify one another's assumptions. A community of inquiry attempts to follow the inquiry where it leads rather than be penned in by the boundary lines of existing disciplines. (2006, p. 20)

That is why literature is worth studying. A student who undertakes literary study is a student who is enhancing and expanding his or her critical consciousness, learning the habit of becoming and being a considered individual among others. To quote the literary critic, Wayne Booth (1988), from his *Ethics of Fiction*,

the [coductive] logic we depend on when we arrive at our particular appraisals is neither deduction from clear premises, even of the most complex kind, nor induction from a series of precisely defined and isolated instances. Rather it is always the result of a direct sense that something now before us has yielded an experience that we find comparatively desirable, lovable or, on the other hand, comparatively repugnant, contemptible, or hateful. (p. 71)

'Critical consciousness' is not the same as the application of the concepts of race, class and gender to a literary text, or the raising of sympathy only. While these three concepts are important moral concepts in the armature of human worlds, they are not the only concepts. Reducing literary studies to strict concerns with only these three moral concepts launches critical appreciation and response into the ideological

domain. This is built on an assumption that literature is simply an ideological vehicle that reinforces the hegemony of the status quo or the dominant authority and its culture. On this view, literature is just sophisticated propaganda. And while sympathy is important, it is not the only considered response a student can produce. Reducing literary studies to a strict concern with sympathy limits critical appreciation to the cultivation of narrow moral sentiments of the romantic kind, which is itself a form of ideology.

We think the value of literature is in the imaginative opportunity to enter the otherwise inaccessible domains of other peoples' human self-awareness. This human self-awareness is complex and subtle. MacNeice (1967) captures this idea nicely when he meditates on the incongruence of snow and pink roses outside the bay window: 'World is crazier and more of it than we think, / Incurably plural'.

4. A new literary humanist pedagogy

What we are calling new literary humanism has implications for how literature is best taught in the classroom. In its pure form, the deliberative literary classroom stretches student curiosity beyond the narrow concerns of ideological reading explicitly taught by a teacher. The deliberative classroom asks literature students to respond thoughtfully, or *coductively*, to borrow Booth's term, because '[c]oduction can never be "demonstrative," apodeictic: it will not persuade those who lack the experience required to perform a similar coduction' (Booth 1988, p. 73). Hence, the idea of drawing out or bringing out the relevance of the narrative together with respect to the impact on the reader critically considered ought to be the game in the literature classroom.

Coduction is social thinking, and the study of literature needs the philosophical community of inquiry. This is the pedagogy appropriate for a new literary humanism. The philosophical community of inquiry starts with personal, reactive responses to the intricacies of the narrative. From this arise reflective questions around the moral and social issues that arise. Why did/do certain characters act in the way that they do? Why do those actions elicit that kind of response from other characters? What kinds of intention might the characters have and why do they have them? How should we appraise their actions and reactions? This is the basics of Harrison's reactive response. It is what we would call the personal response to the dramatic instantiation of a possible world, which is itself born out of the worlds we can and do experience as readers with lives of our own.

Other types of philosophical or literary questions deepen and broaden the community of inquiry, drilling deeper into that which makes literature what it is. Examples could include questions on why language has been used in the way that it has by the author, and how does the style enhance the moral effect or reader positioning? It could include the question of how the use of language employs the games we play with words and the conditions required for their felicity. It may even raise the pesky question of 'author intention' and how that kind of intentionality differs from the intention of an individual.

One of the legacies of the old literary humanism is an unhelpful reverence for literature. Romanticism tended to endow literature with quasi-religious significance. This is implausible in itself and not likely to cut much ice in a modern classroom. Students should be permitted to be irreverent about the works they are reading. The model of this, we suggest, is the work of John Carey (Merton Professor of English Literature at Oxford University). His *What Good are the Arts?* (2005) should be required reading for English teachers, as a model of intelligently irreverent literary criticism. Honest discussion requires constructive irreverence.

Whatever question is raised, it is raised by students from their personal reaction to the concepts and questions that arise in the story or play or poem, but it is shared and discussed in class with others, the teacher included. The literary classroom is a community of inquiry. As Lipman (2006) explains, 'communities of inquiry are characterized by nonadversarial deliberations, shared cognitions, the cultivation of literacy and philosophical imagination, the encouragement of a deep reading, and the enjoyment of dialogical texts' (p. 94). This leads to a process of evaluation. As Booth (1988) notes, '[t]he validity of our coductions must always be corrected in conversations about the coductions of others whom we trust', and they must 'always be subject to the corrections of time ... [with its] further comparisons that can teach us, again by coduction, whether our original appraisals can confirm themselves in further experience' (pp. 72-73). Active learning throws students into the thick of what literature is, a diverse variety of narratives that dramatically instantiate social and moral concepts.

Understanding any expanse of our social world is deliberative and coductive and always only provisionally true, for it is based on the experience of the students in the group. It is thoughtful thinking about personal responses and their place in the generality and abstraction of cultural reality, supported by reasons that have been mediated by the dramatic instantiation of moral concepts in the narrative. It is

structured thinking about what characters do from the understanding of social practices in our world.

Of course, reading is a solitary process. The old literary humanism was right about that. The reader normally reads alone. The outcome might be life changing. But in schools the solitary experience can be made a collective examination of the issues that arise. The solitary reader can bring his or her experience to the inquiry and present it to their peers in the form of questions, claims or observations. Once everyone has had their turn, it is the pool of personal responses that the philosophical community of inquiry tests and raises to the bar of critical consciousness.

From thinking together comes the cultivation of moral imagination. Those who neglect attending to their moral imagination will find their power of interpretation severely diminished, and their deliberative freedom in the world will be severely diminished. Thus, the value of the study of literature is that it offers the opportunity for readers to reflect critically on a literary text and to learn to give a considered response to the way characters instantiate our human moral concepts and their allied social practices.

Students who test their questions, claims and observations collaboratively in a structured and reasoned process, which is modelled to them by a teacher facilitating the process, benefit from two transformational experiences. The first is visible learning, and the second is deep learning. We take the view that deep and visible learning through student-led discussion has a positive impact on the quality of their understanding the vast expanse of our cultural reality, its moral point of view, and its store of concepts. This is a strong theme in John Hattie's (2023) work on education.

Too often, when we have interviewed students about their understanding of success, they comment in terms of learning content ... This is because the tasks or assignments too often privilege knowing the content, the feedback is primarily content-related, and the language and questions of the teacher are dominated by content. The aim is not to bipolarize success criteria as knowing-that or knowing-how but to have the right proportions of knowing-that and knowing-how. (pp. 60-61)

We contend that the philosophical community of inquiry, or any form of Socratic inquiry in the classroom, teaches both 'knowing-that' and 'knowing-how'. It is a requirement of the giving of reasons to support a personal response to a literary work, and to have that response critically shaped by others, to 'know-that' and to 'know-

how' because it must draw on culture as 'a storehouse of the various ways we have developed for giving expression to the way our world is and our particular ways of finding ourselves within it' (Gibson 2012, p. 9). We agree with Gibson (2012) that literature explores the real world

by tracing the link between the conceptual and the cultural. If this is so, though not trading in knowledge, literature turns out to offer what is best described as a fulfilment of the knowledge we bring to it, a completion of our understanding of how our concepts and words function to unite us with others and our world. (p. 9)

Students may focus on race, gender or class as moral concepts, but students are not exclusively concerned with making texts or works fit these three moral concepts as reading practices. They 'know-that' there is more to our human worlds, and more to the study of literature. Through giving answers, in the form of claims, explanations, and reasons, literary thinking is collaborative critical thinking open to broad human concerns. We would rather liken this process of 'knowing-how' to the cultivation of practical wisdom. It may take trial and error through structured coduction in the philosophical community of inquiry, but it does demystify the learning of thinking about 'that' and 'how' through modelling by facilitation.

When we learn anything, we rely on models. We attend to what and how others are doing things, and we imitate them ... Consequently, the students in our charge need to see an image of us as thinkers and learners that they can imitate and learn from. They need to see and hear others' perspectives, insights, and questions as they advance in their own understanding. Students need to see how others plan, monitor, and challenge their own thinking in ways that move them forward. Students need to see that all learners make mistakes and that learning often occurs from reflecting on those mistakes. (Ritchhart, Church & Morrison 2011, p. 29)

'Knowing-how' relies on thinking aloud, and the philosophical community of inquiry is its perfect model. Thinking aloud is important because 'it is unreasonable to expect students to relate, extend, develop deeper conceptual understanding, and transfer unless they have ideas to relate, extend, solve problems, and so on' (Hattie 2023, p. 65). It is essentially what makes works of fiction works of literature simply because the narrative positions its reader to think and deliberate with others. Thinking aloud also provides constant real time data from the students themselves, allowing teachers

to adjust their judgement constantly on student performance. It allows them to facilitate student conversations in meaningful ways toward critically understanding the dramatic instantiation of moral concepts in a narrative against the culture in which they live. To draw on Hattie (2023),

Learning involves teachers seeing learning through the eyes of students and students learning to become their own teachers. It is more than how we teach and much more about the impact of our teaching. It is about educators and how they engage in evaluative thinking, how they work together to critique their interpretations of student learning to move to their next teaching acts and decisions, their openness to learn and seek and receive and use feedback, and their collective efficacy to ensure all (and this means all) students gain at least one year's growth for a year's input. (p. 8)

We take the view that the philosophical community of inquiry captures 'all three levels of knowing ... into one method' (Hattie 2023, p. 65). Collaborative thinking amplifies the appreciation of the perspectives or viewpoints one can take, placing students in a much more considered position analytically. They know how, with, and that. This considered position can reap benefits for students and teacher alike. It reaps a benefit for students because their words are empowered by intelligent understanding. It reaps a benefit for the teacher because it is a delight to hear considered responses to the dramatic instantiation of moral concepts in works of literature. It is a delight to hear students bring their observations before the bar of critical consciousness and guide one another's thinking on the conceptual armature of human worlds.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of literature is to invite us into the critical analysis of the conceptual armature of our human world. It does this by the dramatic instantiation of concepts through plot and character, and it invites our critical consideration and response. This unique feature makes literary works 'machines for thinking'. But this special value needs a suitable pedagogy. It needs student discussion. Building a discursive environment in the classroom has long been a central task of the Philosophy in Schools movement. We have argued here for a more deliberate combination of the community of inquiry pedagogy and the insights of the new literary humanism.

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