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Title: Trust as a Virtue in Education

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Abstract

As social and political beings, we are able to flourish only if we collaborate with others. Trust, understood as a virtue, incorporates appropriate rational emotional dispositions such as compassion as well as action that is contextual, situated in a time and place. We judge responses as appropriate and characters as trustworthy or untrustworthy based on these factors (namely, context, intention, action as well as consequence). To be considered worthy of trust, as an individual or an institution, one must do the right thing at the right time for the right reasons, and the action should have its intended effect. By focussing on character, including a moral agent's emotional disposition, virtue ethicists offer a more holistic account of trust than that explained by a deontic adherence to one's duty as governed by a social contract. I will apply this understanding to educational institutions, particularly primary and secondary schools that serve a vital role in society. One of the main roles schools perform is to assist in character formation so that students, through practice, learn to be trusting and trusted citizens of society. I offer the philosophy in schools methodology of the community of inquiry (CoI) as one example of how such practice may be facilitated in the classroom.

Trust as a Virtue in Education

<u>Introduction</u>

As social and political beings, we are able to flourish only if we collaborate with others. Successful collaboration with others requires trust. Discerning when to trust others and being trustworthy are virtuous character traits. To be considered worthy of trust, as an individual or an institution, one must do the right thing at the right time for the right reasons, and the action should have its intended effect. Utilising a virtue ethics framework, trust lies mid-point on the scale between naivety and cynicism. By focussing on character, virtue ethicists offer a more holistic account of trustworthiness than simply referring to duty or consequences alone and in this way, virtue ethics better captures the nuance that describes what it means to trust someone, as well as to be trustworthy. In this paper I will consider how the virtue of trust may apply to educational institutions, particularly primary and secondary schools. I will ask how we can encourage children to be trustworthy and trusting citizens, as this is an important element of a well-functioning society. I offer the example of the Community of Inquiry (CoI) methodology as used by practitioners of Philosophy for Children (P4C) as one practical way

to build trust within the classroom. I contend that the CoI method works better than that of rule following or outcome-based consideration alone because it provides students with opportunities to practice trusting and being trustworthy within the classroom. This pedagogical approach, therefore, is more holistic than teaching children to follow a rule such as 'always keep your promises', or 'consider the best possible outcome' as it incorporates the idea of placing oneself in another's shoes and compassionately engaging with the specific circumstances under consideration when deciding how to act. In this way, moral agents use appropriate rational emotional dispositions such as care or compassion (Nussbaum, 2001) and a flourishing community is made up of caring citizens who can trust one another as well as their educational institutions.

Firstly, how do we define trust? As Carolyn McLeod (2014) puts it:

> Trust is an attitude that we have towards people whom we hope will be trustworthy, where trustworthiness is a property, not an attitude. Trust and trustworthiness are therefore distinct although, ideally, those whom we trust will be trustworthy, and those who are trustworthy will be trusted. For trust to be warranted (i.e. plausible) in a relationship, the parties to that relationship must have attitudes toward one another that permit trust. Moreover, for trust to be warranted (i.e. well-grounded), both parties must be trustworthy.

Is trust essential to a good education and a pleasant schooling environment, or are strong policies and procedures alone adequate? What leads the community, parents and children, to trust in the school: the teachers, its administrators and managers, and is there such a thing as too much trust whereby the students or parents become vulnerable to corrupted individuals or institutions? Trust is a virtue that, using Aristotle's (1876) golden mean, is balanced between the excessive (naivety) and the deficient (cynicism) attitudes that may be applied contextually. Trust is a virtue because it helps us to flourish, or achieve *eudaimonia.* If citizens and institutions in a society can be trusted, we are more likely to flourish because human beings are social creatures who, for the most part, must work together; ideally within a well-functioning society in which we feel safe. As Aristotle (1876) pointed out, the virtues do not stand alone. They go together, and *phronesis* or practical wisdom requires that trust is supported by discernment and prudence. For Aristotle, the self is a rational self that is social, moral and politicalbecause we live in communities and our behaviour affects one another. Therefore, to be a virtuous person it is not simply enough to do the right thing incidentally. I must have the appropriate disposition to act, in a practical manner, at the right time, and this action should have the desired effect. Such virtuous action requires practice and I become trustworthy by being trustworthy. As Aristotle writes in the *Nicomachean Ethics:*

> Neither by nature, then, nor contrary to nature do the virtues arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit. Again, of all the things that come to us by nature we first acquire the potentiality and later exhibit the activity (this is plain in the case of the senses; for it was not by often seeing or often hearing that we got these senses, but on the contrary we had them

> before we used them, and did not come to have them by using them); but the virtues we get by first exercising them, as also happens in the case of the arts as well. For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them, e.g. men become builders by building and lyre players by playing the lyre; so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts. (Book II, Chapter I)

In order to develop a virtue such as trust, one must practice it via habitual action that is rational and compassionate. A person's character is developed according to the habits practiced and the trustworthy person, then, is habitually trustworthy. Nancy Nyquist Potter (2002, p. 16) defines a trustworthy person as 'one who can be counted on, as a matter of the sort of person he or she is, to take care of those things that others entrust to one and (following the Doctrine of the Mean) whose ways of caring are neither excessive nor deficient'.

It is only when someone describes me as trustworthy that this virtue may be considered to be a part of my character, which refers to my general behaviour, actions and emotional dispositions with which I generally respond to any given scenario. A well-functioning society is made up of moral agents who are able to be trusted. Therefore, the question of how we can encourage children to be trustworthy and appropriately trusting is of importance to those within the field of education. I will outline how the Community of Inquiry (CoI) methodology offers a safe space for students to practice this virtue and build trust within the classroom setting.

Trust and 'good will'

When referring to character, it is not solely the moral agent's action that is important, but also their motivation for acting. Aristotle speaks of how a good will may assist us to behave well towards others, even others with whom we are not friends and may find ourselves in competition. Aristotle (1876) explains:

> Goodwill is a friendly sort of relation, but is not identical with friendship; for one may have goodwill both towards people whom one does not know, and without their knowing it, but not friendship…But goodwill is not even friendly feeling. For it does not involve intensity or desire, whereas these accompany friendly feeling; and friendly feeling implies intimacy while goodwill may arise of a sudden, as it does towards competitors in a contest; we come to feel goodwill for them and to share in their wishes, but we would not do anything with them; for, as we said, we feel goodwill suddenly and love them only superficially. (Book IX, Chapter V)

The virtuous moral agent surely has a good will, as evidenced by their actions which are reasonable, and motivated by a rational emotion such as sympathy or compassion, or, to put it more generally, the sense that others are 'like me' in certain ways (Nussbaum, 1996).

Despite differences between people, the virtues are shared as everyone wants to live a peaceful life and, ultimately, flourish (Hursthouse, 1996). So, even if our application of the virtues may change over time and across cultures, humans will generally agree that it is a good thing to be trustworthy, honest, and kind. This sense of common humanity is encapsulated by the 'golden rule' – I am able to imaginatively engage with a scenario and consider how I would like to be treated and then apply this fellow-feeling to my decision as to how I should act (Nussbaum, 1987). Nussbaum, following Aristotle, argues that an obstacle to a morally adequate sense of sympathy is ignorance of the fact that all humans can suffer loss (Nussbaum, 1996, p. 34). Therefore, as per the example Aristotle gives above, even if I am in competition with someone, I will follow the rules of a 'fair fight' for instance, as this is the virtuous thing to do.

Proponents of a will based account of trust claim that in order to trust, the moral agent must be motivated by a good will. This makes sense, as we are unable to trust those we have no good will towards. One must have a certain sense of optimism about people to be able to trust them. If I do not have the hope that people will do what they are meant to do or that I can rely upon them, then I mistrust them. As McLeod notes, with reference to Becker (1996), an important criterion for trust is that the trustee can accept some level of risk or vulnerability. In trusting, we could be mistaken and have our trust broken, or be tricked. Yet, I maintain it is still better to trust than to not as this is more likely to assist us to achieve *eudaimonia* than if we refuse to trust others. When citizens have a sense of good will toward one another and act in a reasonable manner, they display compassion for others, which in turn supports a civilised society that allows its members to flourish.

Trust as a relational attitude

Trust is a relational attitude and its manifestation is contextual. Sprod (2001, p. 127) notes trust is a virtue within 'the ethical virtue (or bundle of virtues) called respect' and the profile of these virtue(s) vary according to one's culture where trust, or respect, truthfulness, or friendliness, may be more or less highly prized and encouraged via socialization (Sprod, 2001, p. 128). Trust, like other virtues, will manifest in particular ways in certain contexts. Sprod notes that these virtues have to do 'with the "intercourse of words and actions" (1108a10); that is with the relationships between persons in discourse and interaction' (2001, pp. 129-130, citing Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*). Any moral progress that is made is via dialogue, training and habituation on a virtue ethics framework. The virtue of trust may be judged in terms of behaviour, but it is also accompanied by an appropriate disposition to do the right thing because it is the right thing.

A trustworthy person is not simply one who follows a deontic rule such as 'keep your promises', as this does not allow for the difference between being reliable and being trustworthy. Trust is a relational attitude and it can be difficult to pin down what exactly we mean when we say someone can be trusted or that a person is trustworthy. To trust someone is more than simply relying on them, as Annette Baier explains, 'trusting can be betrayed, or at least let down, and not just disappointed' (1986, p. 235). Trust includes an emotional

aspect whereby I become vulnerable to emotional hurt if my trust is unwarranted or misplaced.

Theorists such as Russell Hardin (2002) claim that trust involves a commitment and what matters is whether or not the trustee is committed to, and able to fulfil their obligation(s). Yet Hardin's view does not explain the motivation for the commitment. The moral agent's motivation is relevant as, if they are only fulfilling a commitment for selfish reasons, then trust in them may not be warranted. For example, in this instance, the self-serving person may be relied upon to fulfil their duty; yet if the circumstances changed only slightly that very same person could not be trusted to keep their word if it no longer proved useful to them. Thus, this moral agent is not trustworthy due to their self-serving disposition. Meanwhile, Baier's fuller account explains why, if the commitment made is broken, this results in an emotional response such as a feeling of betrayal. I may be disappointed if, for example, the office printer breaks down and fails to print out my papers, yet there is something extra occurring when I trust someone as opposed to merely relying upon something. As I have hinted at already, this 'something extra' is an emotional component that may be attributed to a good will.

It seems as though the moral agent is disingenuous if they fail to act from a sense of good will aimed at others, or a genuine desire to 'do the right thing'. It may be impossible to know for sure if a moral agent is genuinely trustworthy with the requisite good will or whether they are merely following social codes and conventions. It may be true that we can never know another's dispositions, however, this is where the virtue ethics account is useful to supplement Baier's account because it speaks of character and general attitudes and behaviour over time. There may be one-offs where an individual may behave in an unexpected manner, but humans are usually fairly predictable creatures in that the habits we form (either due to nature or nurture or a combination of the two) are often going to account for how we will generally respond to people and situations. The 'will' here may not be transparent, but it does reveal itself, over time, with continued observance of the moral agent's gestures and actions. A virtuous person adopts an appropriate attitude of benevolence towards others, which may be linked to rational emotions such as compassion and the ability to consider the perspective of another who differs to oneself.

Contemporary virtue ethicist, Martha Nussbaum (2016, p. 94) considers the complexity of trust as a virtue:

> Trust…is different from mere reliance…Trust, by contrast, involves opening oneself to the possibility of betrayal, hence to a very deep form of harm. It means relaxing the self-protective strategies with which we usually go through life, attaching great importance to actions by the other over which one has little control. It means, then, living with a certain degree of helplessness….Is trust a matter of belief or emotion? Both, in complexly related ways. Trusting someone, one believes that she will keep her commitments, and at the same time one appraises those commitments as very important for one's own flourishing. But

> that latter appraisal is a key constituent part of a number of emotions, including hope, fear, and, if things go wrong, deep grief and loss. Trust is probably not identical to those emotions, but under normal circumstances of life it often proves sufficient for them. One also typically has other related emotions toward a person whom one trusts, such as love and concern. Although one typically does not decide to trust in a deliberate way, the willingness to be in someone else's hands is a kind of choice, since one can certainly live without that type of dependency.

Therefore, the virtuous person will have relevant moral sentiments such as 'care' which also explains why trust is a relational attitude. When trust is broken, a sense of betrayal is the appropriate response as we expected or relied upon a person to act out of goodwill as opposed to ill will, selfishness, or habit bred out of indifference (Baier, 1986, pp. 234–5; McLeod, 2014). The next important question educators will ask is how we can encourage children to practice caring responses to others and learn the specific ways they should apply the virtues, such as trust and trustworthiness, in a context. In answer to such a question, the virtue ethics framework is particularly useful to apply when considering the role of character in the goals of educational systems and the role schools play in communities.

Trust as a Virtue in Schools

When it comes to education, schools are the kinds of institutions in which we place our trust, rather than simply rely upon. The two are linked, as surely I also rely on the school, but to trust in the teachers and other staff is to expect more of them to simply educate the students or, in particular, my child. I also expect them to *care* about my child's well-being and this is why I trust in them. If they do not care for my child, then surely I will feel more than disappointment. As Baier notes, I would rightly feel betrayed. In this way, schools play an important role in a community, and this role is not solely utilitarian in the manner of an economic provider. I trust a teacher in a different or 'deeper' way than I trust or rely upon a salesperson who sells me a car or a checkout clerk from whom I purchase groceries. Tangentially, this line of argument may be extended to claim that it is problematic to commodify education in a utilitarian fashion by seeking the 'bottom line' and results rather than caring about the individual students and teachers who make up such educational institutions.

To trust in a school, I must have good reasons to trust. The policies and procedures must be practical and sensible as opposed to corrupt or ineffective. If I were to trust in a corrupt institution or person, I may be naïve or have failed to apply enough practical wisdom (prudence, self-reflection and information gathering or discernment) to ascertain the appropriate response to such a place or person. Likewise, if I cannot trust anything at all, the system cannot work in the way it needs to. I may as well home school my children if I am incapable of trusting anyone else to take any part in the job of educating my child (note that this is not to say that home schooling itself is problematic), and arguably if this is the reason behind my decision I am not faring well in the world whereby I need to trust in all sorts of systems and people in order to live in society.

In order to make the school trustworthy, its systems, policies and procedures, as well as its individual members must be reflected upon. This includes considering the community or area in which the school operates, and relevant political, economic and social factors. There is a strong sense of wanting to protect vulnerable people (particularly children) from the worst effects of misplaced trust. Further, there may be a situation whereby the sense of communal identity overtakes that of the individuals and members of the school community may even eschew their own self-interest in favour of the school regulations. Thus, striking a balance between individual and social good is highlighted as an important aspect of a flourishing school environment.

While parents and citizens would like to trust in the schooling system, and in particular schools and teachers, we also have an interest in how the school helps shape our young citizens to be trusting and trustworthy. The school is a structured institution comprised of a group of people who aim at educating students and providing a place that offers a sense of community, not only to those who attend and work there, but also to those who live nearby. The virtuous end goal or *telos* that the school aims for is to educate students for life, treating them as ends-in-themselves, rather than as a means to some other end that may be utilitarian such as a political or economically motivated purpose. In this sense, then, educators aim to help shape students to be able to develop the skills they require in order to live happy lives in the future. Such skills include practical rationality (prudence or *phronesis*) and the virtues. Aristotle (1876) claims that humans aim at flourishing (*eudaimonia*) and the cultivation of the virtues is a rational way to achieve this happiness. This is because, as social beings, we value character traits such as trust, honesty, and kindness that allow humans to live well together collaboratively. Therefore, schools not only aim at teaching students practical skills that would enable them to get a job or have a vocation, but also recognise the importance of valuing and encouraging character traits that would enable students to be good citizens who are a part of a harmonious society.

The fact that educational institutions are training good citizens, not simply good workers, is not controversial. In an Australian context, these goals are reflected in both the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (Barr et al., 2008) and the Australian Curriculum, Assessment, and Reporting Authority (ACARA, 2014) documentation online. The Melbourne Declaration consists of two goals, the first requiring that 'Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence' (Barr et al., 2008, p. 7) and the second requiring 'all young Australians become confident and creative individuals' (Barr et al., 2008, p. 8). In line with these goals, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment, and Reporting Authority (ACARA) developed seven General Capabilities upon which Australian schools nationally were to base their curriculum. These capabilities include critical and creative thinking; personal and social capability; ethical understanding; intercultural understanding; Literacy; Numeracy; and ICT (Information and Communication Technologies). The general capabilities highlight the themes that educators seek to work with in all teaching areas because they are relevant skills that apply to lifelong learners. These general capabilities apply across the curriculum precisely because they assist in reinforcing holistic thinking and interpersonal skills that help a student to understand why maths, science

and English are important to life. Not just to a job as, for example, a nurse or an engineer, but more broadly to living a good life.

On this view, the contextual individual living in a society is better off considering and accounting for the needs and desires of others as well as for their own. In evolutionary terms we may call this reciprocal altruism or kin selection. Communal living and a desire for happiness creates the values of self-care alongside care for others (D'Olimpio & Teschers, 2014). In order for me to live a happy life, I rely on others in my community to be community minded and not simply self-serving or, worse still, destructive towards others. It would be very difficult to be the only virtuous person in a corrupt society, for example. One's environment affects what you can and cannot do, to a certain extent, or at least what you think of as moral behaviour. This is why the formative experiences in school and at home are so important for children and the feeling of trust is central to a happy child who feels as if they are a part of a supportive community and valued for their unique contribution. Thus, the question of how trust is generated in a school is an important one, even though the answer may not be straightforward or the same in every case.

Cultivating Trust through the Community of Inquiry

For children to practice trusting, as and where appropriate, and to develop trustworthiness is particularly important in relation to the school environment. Part of what builds confidence in children is enabling them to trust themselves and their own judgement, and supporting this self-belief by demonstrating how their opinions and beliefs are listened to in a respectful manner. One way children may be heard and have room to self-reflect is through the introduction of philosophy with children into the school curriculum. Advocates of Philosophy for Children (Splitter & Sharp, 1995; Lipman, 2003) practice the Community of Inquiry (CoI) method in order to facilitate philosophical dialogue that promotes valuable thinking skills. Such skills assist students to not only perform better academically, but also socially (Millett & Tapper, 2012, p.546). Philosophy for Children (P4C) and proponents of the CoI are thus able to facilitate and support the development of critical, creative and caring thinking skills.

When students and a teacher form a CoI, they are creating a safe space whereby the participants in the dialogue can trust each other to build upon as well as to critically analyse ideas. Seated in an inward-facing circle, a CoI is a collaborative process that is facilitated by a teacher who is well-trained in philosophy and in the CoI. The teacher as facilitator allows the conversation to follow the line of inquiry that emerges whilst keeping the discussion on topic. In this way, the CoI allows for intellectual inquiry that is contextual and dynamic. The ideas of participants are interactive, developing and transforming as they meet or yield to those of others. The aim of the dialogue that takes place is to get closer towards a shared truth, it is not a game which someone wins. As the process is collaborative rather than competitive, the CoI values knowledge for its own sake as per the Socratic tradition.

The CoI is usually focussed on a central, open question that has been selected democratically. In order to select a question, a stimulus must firstly be used, such as an age-appropriate text, a narrative, or an object. An activity may be conducted prior to the CoI such as Cam's Question Quadrant (2006) or a concept game in order to generate questions, the answers to which may then be further explored or a central question selected for the focus of the CoI dialogue that follows. The dialogue that follows is democratic, encouraging a range of diverse perspectives to be explored critically, with ideas being built upon or discarded. As Laurance Splitter (2011, p. 497) explains:

> Participating in a coi allows students, individually and collaboratively, to develop their own ideas and perspectives based on appropriately rigorous modes of thinking and against the background of a thorough understanding and appreciation of those ideas and perspectives that, having stood the test of time, may be represented as society's best view of things to date.

Participating in a CoI provides the individual with an opportunity to recognise that they are not an isolated cogito but, rather, '*one among others*' (Splitter, 2011, p. 497). As I recognise that others are more or less similar to me, even when we have different thoughts, feelings and experiences, I trust that others wish to be free from harm and able to express ideas without fear of persecution, as do I. Splitter identifies three key components of this process that are cognitive as well as affective. These include, firstly, appreciating my own self-worth, arising from a recognition of my role in the community; secondly, appreciating that others are also striving for this kind of self-appreciation and thirdly, 'understanding that self-appreciation and appreciation for others are interdependent and mutually reinforcing' (2011, pp. 497-8).

The group participating in the CoI must be made up of members who trust one another if it is to function well. If there is no good will present and assumed, then the participants in the CoI will not feel safe when conveying their thoughts, or when others disagree with their ideas. A key guideline CoI members should follow is that of 'address the topic, not the person'. This is pivotal to philosophical debate as it allows for disagreement to occur over ideas, without committing the fallacy of an *ad hominem* attack. Procedurally this is important as it allows for members of the CoI to play 'devil's advocate' and see if their ideas can respond to objections and counter arguments that are posed. An idea is strengthened when it can reply to an oppositional idea that challenges it. All the while, students should feel safe and cared for as members of a group of inquiring minds. This is further reinforced by Splitter's remark that '[t]he coi is an interactive environment whose entire rationale is the wellbeing of its members (in intellectual, moral and affective terms)' (2011, p. 498).

Sprod (2001, p. 183) explains how the virtues cultivated within a CoI may then extend beyond the CoI:

> Although students may or may not join willingly, for it to work, the community must soon build communalities. Chief will be the interest in the inquiry itself, allied to a growing trust in the community's members as fellow inquirers. Part of

> that reliance on others will arise from the recognition and valuing of diversity within the community: diversity of views, of learning approaches, of styles of reasonableness. And finally, there may well come a recognition that the boundaries of the classroom community of inquiry are porous; that this community does not exclude outsiders, and that the capacities learned in the community apply outside it.

Sprod (2001, p. 201) then considers the teacher's role in a CoI and whether the teacher playing 'devil's advocate' betrays the trust of the students. Sprod notes that '[Glaser (1998)] claims that no member of the community, including the teacher, can act in a way that violates the "stronger condition of trust that underpins dialogical action", and that playing the devil's advocate does betray trust because the devil's advocate argues a case that is not sincerely held.' Yet, in contrast to Glaser, Sprod worries that this very narrow definition of the 'devil's advocate' strategy being employed would result in teachers never advancing arguments for views they do not hold, which may well limit the CoI dialogue. Sprod claims that here Glaser collapses the role of the teacher into a member of the community, without retaining their pedagogical authority, which is essential to a well-functioning CoI.

Furthermore, Sprod (2001, p. 202) claims that the teacher in their role as pedagogical authority inhabit a role that:

> [E]ntails a different variety of trust from that which Glaser identifies. Her trust is the trust extended to a fellow member of the community – that they will be sincere – which ought to apply to the student members of the community. The teacher, on the other hand, is mandated to take open strategic action, and the trust that students extend to the teacher is the belief that the teacher's actions will be educational. The teacher has a duty to meet that trust.

Sprod is correct. Any good philosophy teacher will introduce students to diverse theories, arguments and ideas, and encourage the critical consideration of those ideas. Within the CoI a teacher may play 'devil's advocate' either by stating this is what they will do, or by asking new questions of the group, but surely this pedagogical tool is different to them arguing deceptively. If the teacher is arguing deceptively, then, at this point Sprod agrees with Glaser that the trust within the CoI will break down (2001, p. 202).

Practicing Trustworthiness

Potter (2002) speaks about how the teacher cultivates trustworthiness in relation to her students by the way in which she attends to the dynamics of knowledge, power and trust in the classroom. Citing special cases where extra care is required, Potter is making a claim about epistemic responsibility and considering the experiences of students as participants in a classroom environment. The manner in which this practice is performed is in an ordinary, empirical manner. The virtue ethicist acknowledges that we learn by doing, through trial and error. Potter refers to Wittgenstein's *On Certainty,* quoting:

> § 150. How does someone judge which is his right and which his left hand? How do I know that my judgment will agree with someone else's? How do I know that this colour is blue? If I don't trust myself here, why should I trust anyone else's judgment? Is there a why? Must I not begin to trust somewhere? That is to say: somewhere I must begin with not-doubting; and that is not, so to speak, hasty but excusable: it is part of judging. (Wittgenstein, 1969, 22e)

Wittgenstein makes a pragmatic point here that we make judgements every day and we do not always reflect on judgements made, unless they turn out to be incorrect. Even if my senses can be doubted and occasionally tricked, I must rely upon them and at least in this sense trust myself, in so far as I am an empirical being. Wittgenstein (§140) writes 'We do not learn the practice of making empirical judgments by learning rules'. Aristotle would certainly agree, as he claims 'For the things we have to learn before we can do, we learn by doing' (Book II, 1103.a33). Pragmatically, judgements we make and our corresponding behaviours will be role dependent as we consider contextual situations.

In relation to teachers, Potter (2002, p. 97) writes 'I stress the responsibility of teachers to develop a trustworthy character in relation to their students'. This entails pedagogical responsibilities as well as epistemic and moral responsibilities as appropriate to the teacher's institutional role. Again we rely on the golden mean – doing the right amount, for the right reason, at the appropriate time. This requires self-awareness, and reflection. It is likely that my 'mean' is different to that of another teacher, but surely in practice we can generally agree upon and recognise teachers that routinely go above and beyond, and those who are deficient and do not do enough or who do the bare minimum. This sense of 'what that amounts to' isn't easily quantifiable as much as it is qualitatively recognised and valued in practice.

If the virtues are stable character traits, then developing good habits is central to forming virtuous characters. Supporting an Aristotelian perspective, Robert Audi (2009, p. 43) acknowledges that character may change over time, but that the moral agent's virtues and vices could still be stable, or, in his words, reliable. The 'firm and unchanging character' (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1105a29) Aristotle refers to indicates that virtuous people are reliable because they are not 'fickle, spineless, or (in certain ways) whimsical' (Audi, 2009, p. 44). Audi further notes (p. 43):

> A reliable person can change, even in character, in ways that do not affect reliability. Indeed, we must make room for the point that reliability admits of degrees and one can therefore become more reliable (or less so).

It is through sustained practice that we can become more (or less) reliable, considerate, honest and trustworthy. Such habits must be practiced in a context, rather than being abstract intellectual rules we agree upon. For example, moral agents may agree that we should be honest, yet what constitutes honest action in real life may differ between people and across times and places. In part we learn to reflect on our actions and intentions based upon how

others react to us. If we receive a negative reaction, we are more inclined to work at refining our habitual actions.

It is this collaborative contextual learning that the CoI offers that makes it an effective pedagogical tool for students to learn good habits; both intellectual habits such as justification and discernment, and affective habits such as care. Splitter (2015) argues that all classrooms should be transformed into communities of inquiry, and the defence he provides for this claim lies in the communitarian notion of personal identity he defends. Splitter argues that classrooms are central to the practice of children 'becoming persons', whereby persons 'are characterized by networks of relationships that have both semantic/linguistic and moral/ethical dimensions' (Splitter, 2015, p. 185). The CoI is a useful pedagogical tool precisely because we develop our sense of personal identity through our interactions with others, which the CoI is designed to facilitate. The CoI requires that inquirers enter into a dialogue and asks that they remain intellectually humble. This is achieved because, when aiming at shared, pluralistic truth, a space must be left available for always new information to come to light. This idea of knowledge as accumulated and self-correcting relies on the notion of falsifiability. (Splitter, 2015, p. 188, citing Karl Popper). In the CoI in the classroom as well as in life, students have an advantage if they do not believe that there is one perfect immutable truth and they allow for the possibility that new information may change or refine their beliefs.

As the classroom is identified as one place where students become persons, the role of education in this self-forming process is of vital importance to society as well as to the individual. As we see ourselves as one among others, dialogue plays a crucial role in the development of our cognitive and affective capacities, particularly in how we make meaning and see ourselves as a member of a community. Thus the CoI ideally fosters such skills that apply inside and outside of the classroom.

Concluding Thoughts

As we do not live alone as isolated individuals, we need to trust others within our community. We also need to discern who is reliable and worthy of our trust. Educational institutions have a central role to play in helping to shape trustworthy citizens. Cultivating reasonable citizens allows people to do what they wish to do with the talents they have at their disposal and these people will make their own choices; yet, if they are rational, they will uphold the Golden Rule: do not do unto others as you would not have them do unto you. A flourishing community gives people the freedom to choose what they want to do and how they would like to contribute, while upholding some normative guidelines and a moral framework that is agreed upon by all. I have claimed that schools that model and support certain kinds of practices such as the community of inquiry methodology advocated by philosophy for children practitioners play a pivotal role in teaching members of society what it means to be trustworthy and, hopefully, sets them up to live a good life.

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