

## Présentation de l'ICPIC (International Council for Philosophical Inquiry)

**Roger Sutcliffe**, President of ICPIC

- ICPIC was founded in 1985, in Elsinore, Denmark, to take forward at an international level the pioneering work of Professors Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp, of the IAPC (Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children, <http://www.montclair.edu/iapc>), which had started at the turn of the 60's/70's in New Jersey, USA.

- Lipman, then Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University, had been struck by the lack of reasoning ability - indeed, of reasonableness - among students in general at the University, and speculated that these might have been better if they had had some practice with philosophical questioning and reasoning at an earlier age.

So, despite there being no tradition of doing philosophy at schools in America, Lipman decided to try out some of his ideas with 11 yr olds in some local schools, under the title of 'Philosophy for Children' (generally shortened to P4C).

He wrote some stories about children that were 'seeded' with philosophical concepts and problems, and invited classes to pose questions about the stories, and to pursue rational, philosophical enquiries in response to their own questions.

Gradually he and his associates, especially Ann Margaret Sharp, developed a model that classroom teachers, after some initial training, could rely upon to carry forward the process themselves. This model was given the name 'Community of Inquiry', a phrase originally used by the 19th century American philosopher Charles Peirce to describe what we nowadays refer to as 'the scientific community'. But Lipman and Sharp have developed the concept and practice of 'Communities of Enquiry' into a powerful pedagogical 'tool' for the 21st century, reconstructing the rigid relationship between pupils and teachers into a dynamic, dialogical relationship between enquirers and facilitators.

- That relationship is at the heart, for example, of the European Union Comenius project, 'Developing Dialogue through Philosophical Inquiry' - the piloting of a course for teachers of all subjects and all levels by 'Philosophy for Children' educators from 11 European countries. These countries form roughly half of the European network for philosophical inquiry with children, which is called SOPHIA. This has the status of a 'Stichting' or foundation, registered in Amsterdam.

- There are two other formal, regional networks promoting philosophical inquiry elsewhere in the world, namely NAACI (North Atlantic Association for Communities of Inquiry, (<http://www.viterbo.edu/perspgs/faculty/RMorehouse/NAACIWebPage.htm>), which involves Canada, USA and Mexico, and FAPSA (Federation of Australasian Philosophy in Schools Associations, <http://www.fapsa.org.au>).

[www.fapsa.org.au](http://www.fapsa.org.au) ) which is in loose affiliation with some Asian countries where P4C (Philosophy for Children) or variations of it are practised.

- There are also national associations in many other countries not represented in the regional networks above. For example, many of the Latin American countries have centres promoting philosophical inquiry with children. Indeed, the country where more children are involved in such activity than anywhere else is Brazil. Here some 100000 children do philosophy at school, and Brazil also pioneered the practice with street children. The country also has a Master's program at the University of Cuiaba. (Full Master's programmes are also run in USA and Canada, and P4C is a component of Master's programmes in UK, Australia, Mexico and elsewhere.)

- Altogether, over 60 countries are loosely affiliated to ICPIIC, but at this point it should be noted that ICPIIC is itself rather a loose network than a formal NGO. It does have a constitution, with an executive committee (President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer) elected at its biannual conference, the 13th of which is due to be held in Jerusalem, June 4 - 7, 2007. But these are honorary posts, and the present committee is looking into registering as a not-for-profit organisation, with a view to establishing a more permanent secretariat, better able to manage the membership and many other needs of a network which has enormous potential for good in a world which is struggling to construct itself through international dialogue.

- ICPIIC, in fact, provides a model of constructive dialogue both in itself and for children of all nationalities and cultures. When it was founded Lipman's programme (consisting of 6 full-length stories and teacher manuals) was the only systematic curriculum in philosophical inquiry for 6-16 years, and therefore, naturally, provided a model for other countries, many of which translated the material. However, in succeeding years some countries have developed different materials for use in schools, and most countries have their own teacher training programmes.

There is, then, diversity and continuing dialogue within ICPIIC about the principles and best practices of philosophical inquiry with children. It would be fair to say that the concept of 'communities of inquiry' binds most practitioners together, but there are some members, coming perhaps from more didactic traditions of philosophy, who hold the flag for some more direct teaching and modelling of philosophical inquiry as well as encouraging children to take responsibility for asking their own questions and interrogating each other's concepts and beliefs.

- In the words of Lipman, to conclude, 'philosophy is the spirit of inquiry', and what ICPIIC offers children - and the educational world at large - is a refreshment of the principles and practices of education. That is to say, it sees healthy learning in any subjects not as a routine task of absorbing prescribed facts but as an expression and fulfilment of a person's natural curiosity or will to inquire - which itself is nothing other than 'philosophia', the love of wisdom.

- Then, however, it adds one extra, vital dimension for the 21st century - when the international community is torn by callous deeds, such as '9/11', and by careless language, such as 'clash of

civilisations' and 'war on terrorism', and when even national communities are torn by perceived cultural tensions. That dimension, inherent in the notion of 'Community of Inquiry', is the value of dialogue in enabling individuals in the community to understand each other better, and thereby to understand and co-construct the world better.