

*In Community of Inquiry with Ann Margaret Sharp: Childhood, Philosophy and Education*, by Maughn Rollins Gregory and Megan Jane Lavery (eds). London, UK, Routledge. 286 pages. ISBN 978-1-138-650367

*In Community of Inquiry with Ann Margaret Sharp: Childhood, Philosophy and Education* is the first in a series edited by Maughn Gregory and Megan Lavery, *Philosophy for Children Founders*, and is a major contribution to the literature on philosophy in schools. It draws attention to an author and practitioner who was largely responsible for the development of scholarship on the community of inquiry, who co-founded the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC), and who undeniably made a significant contribution to philosophy for/with children as a global movement.

For anyone familiar with Philosophy for Children, they would, no doubt, also be familiar with its founder Matthew Lipman. However, not always acknowledged is that Ann Margaret Sharp, a philosopher of education, was also one of its pioneers who collaborated with Lipman to develop a theory and practice of the community of inquiry as a collaborative pedagogy and method for Philosophy with Children, as well as a pre-college curriculum. Also, not widely known is that the term 'community of inquiry' first appeared in an article co-authored by Lipman and Sharp (1978). Lipman credited Sharp with reconstructing the Peircean/Buchlerian notion of community of inquiry into a model of educational practice. Together they extensively developed the community of inquiry as an approach to teaching, said to transform the structure of the classroom in fundamental ways. Gregory and Lavery set the record straight regarding Sharp's involvement in the development and success of Philosophy for Children as a school program and worldwide movement. Both editors are highly qualified for a project like this. Between them they have written numerous articles, book chapters and books and have co-edited books on philosophy of education, particularly philosophy for/with children. They are also well-respected practitioners who have collaborated with Sharp.

While Sharp and Lipman have become significant figures in the history of philosophy for/with children, Lipman's publications have drawn more attention and Sharp's works have remained lesser known. Despite her scholarly works being published in numerous academic journals and edited collections worldwide, they are not always easily accessible to educators and practitioners. The editors, therefore, should be commended for making a significant contribution, insofar as they have put together an anthology that gathers a selection of her works that is now more readily available.

To this end, this first volume in the series makes a valuable, and much needed, contribution to the literature on philosophy for/with children, and more generally to educational philosophy and philosophy in schools.

As she wrote on a broad range of topics, it would not be possible to capture the extent of Sharp's work in one volume. Nevertheless, the editors have effectively managed to cover the essential components of Sharp's scholarship, i.e. key areas on which she wrote extensively and for which she is acknowledged by her colleagues as having expertise or having made important contributions. Moreover, they have provided readers with something unique; not only is it the first publication to offer an anthology of selected works representing Sharp's scholarly output, they have also invited eminent international scholars, who are all recognised experts in their field of study, to make commentary on key areas of education on which she focussed. These include: pragmatism; feminism; ethics; religion and spirituality; caring thinking; social, political and global education; and pedagogy and teacher education. Unmistakeably, this book offers a profile of a woman whose scholarly work was inseparable from her teaching and commitment to social justice through education, as well as filling a much-needed gap as currently there are no other substantial works dedicated to Sharp's work.

The book begins with an editors' introduction that provides a concise biography of Sharp's professional and personal life, her philosophical influences, educational theory and practice, and her contribution to the development of philosophy for/with children internationally, as well as an assessment of the impact of her scholarship. Next is an interview by Peter Shea in dialogue with Sharp in which she reflects on her experiences with community of inquiry and its development as a productive pedagogy. This is followed by seven parts; each part beginning with an essay by a scholar whose research is in an area of study to which Sharp has contributed, followed by a selection of Sharp's articles (of which there are thirteen in total).

Part I, titled 'Ann Margaret Sharp on pragmatism and the community of inquiry', is introduced by Philip Cam, who assesses Sharp's contribution to pragmatist philosophy of education and highlights her understanding of the community of inquiry as a practice of developing the self to make sense of our world. In Part II, 'Ann Margaret Sharp on philosophy of education, teacher education and the community of inquiry', Stefano Oliverio explores Sharp's Nietzschean roots that have influenced her philosophy of education and teaching, which focuses on children's intellectual liberation. Authored by Laurance Splitter, Part III, 'Ann Margaret Sharp on ethics,

personhood and the community of inquiry', examines connections between Sharp's character and her writing, revealing key aspects in her thinking, especially her thoughts on the centrality of embodied relationships in moral engagement and developing community in educational settings. María Teresa de la Garza introduces Part IV, 'Ann Margaret Sharp on feminism, children and the community of inquiry', in which she addresses the political dimensions of Sharp's ideas, namely, social justice, feminism and philosophy of childhood in relation to her work on philosophy of education and community of inquiry as a practice of liberation, from which 'the child as critic' arises. In Part V, 'Ann Margaret Sharp on religion, spirituality, aesthetics and the community of inquiry', Peter Shea attempts to understand Sharp's scholarship on the relationship between classroom inquiry and religious concepts, stories and rituals. In Part VI, 'Ann Margaret Sharp on caring thinking, education of the emotions and the community of inquiry', Richard Morehouse assesses Sharp's ideas on the education of the emotions and caring thinking in the development of self, comparing Lipman's focus on epistemological aspects of caring thinking as a method of inquiry with Sharp's emphasis on the ontological dimension more akin to caring thinking as a way of life. Jennifer Glaser's commentary in Part VII, 'Ann Margaret Sharp on social-political education and the community of inquiry', concentrates on two influential figures, John Dewey and Hannah Arendt, who shaped Sharp's thinking about the normative dimensions of Philosophy for Children and the capacity of the community of inquiry to transform into action beyond the classroom, and to engage students within their own communities, and, thus, extending the notion of the community of inquiry as a form of democratic public life. The final entry is a poem written by Sharp.

Overall, this anthology certainly achieves one of its main goals, namely, to draw critical attention to and promote a body of work by a seemingly underrated scholar who was largely over-shadowed by Lipman's reputation as the founder of Philosophy for Children. More than this, this anthology is also a comprehensive overview of Sharp's diverse interests and thoughts on philosophy and education; a 'must have' for philosophy for/with children scholars and practitioners, and the wider audience of philosophers of education, teacher educators, curriculum designers, classroom teachers, and anyone interested in the historical developments of the 'philosophy in schools' movement.

Noteworthy, is that the chapters—both the commentaries and Sharp's articles—contain common themes that are weaved together to provide a narrative that gives readers a sense of who Ann Margaret Sharp was. Among other things, she was a philosopher of education who was inspired by feminist values and committed to the

emancipation of children through education, and who made significant and original contributions to philosophy of education. As her scholarship and experiences as a woman and teacher (i.e. theory and practice) were interrelated, the chapters also provide diverse analyses of her understanding, which she continually reconstructed throughout her lifetime, of the community inquiry as education that facilitates self-growth. Moreover, readers who read from cover to cover will, I believe, experience a sense of being in dialogue with Ann with new characters (i.e. the authors who contributed to each part) being introduced with each new section through the commentary and themes that philosophically overlap.

Another point of note, brought out through the commentaries, is Sharp's commitment to the community of inquiry, which is also revealed in her articles. This is to be commended, as her enthusiasm inspired so many teachers and philosophers alike to promote the educational value of the community of inquiry in over sixty countries around the world. She travelled far and wide to achieve this, whereas Lipman seemed to be content to promote it through his scholarship and position as Director of the IAPC. However, her seemingly unwavering commitment could also be taken as being somewhat uncritical of that which she co-created, and her scholarship questioned, regarded as either merely promoting her ideas or defending philosophy for/with children against its critics, rather than critical analyses that could have provided a platform for serious scholarly conversations beyond the philosophy for/with children movement or to develop her ideas further.

A related matter, and an important one, is Sharp's use of the community of inquiry in the context of broader social and political concerns about the role of the teacher, schools and education generally and their relationship to culture. While the commentaries by the contributors do address her interrelated thoughts on education and culture and social and political concerns, the literature on which they rely is limited to scholarship in philosophy for/with children rather than situating Sharp's work in the greater community of philosophy and the world generally. For example, unlike the concerns of many feminist scholars and practitioners regarding the relationship of philosophy for/with children to emerging theoretical issues in feminist philosophy—specifically feminists' criticisms of philosophy's putative neutrality, which is covered well by many feminist writers in a special double issue and a follow up issue, edited by Sharp, 'Women, Feminism and Philosophy for Children', in *Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children*—the same cannot be said of her views on the community of inquiry, which this anthology could have redressed. Recent scholarship has turned to the problem of western bias given the theoretical underpinnings of philosophy for/with

children come from the Anglo-American tradition of philosophy. These underpinnings could be said to ignore epistemic frameworks outside of this tradition and, therefore, ignore the foundations of systematic discrimination and institutional practices that stem from and perpetuate dominant representations of minority groups (see Kohan 1995), such as indigenous philosophies (see Rainville, 2000), or that the IAPC curriculum rarely addresses race or racism (see Chetty 2014; Murriss 2013) or that it 'is evaluative and prescriptive (in the sense of what counts as philosophy and what needs to be appropriated by the learners) and therefore normative' (Murriss 2015, p. 67). Sharp would argue that such concerns could be addressed in a community of inquiry; however, this begs the question, as the very notion of the community of inquiry as a methodology founded on western notions of philosophy as a discipline and institutional practice is itself under question (Thornton & Burgh 2019).

This brings me to my next, and more general, point. The commentaries, while providing analyses, could be said to err on the side of caution, insofar as they largely contextualise Sharp's work, clarify her ideas, offer explanations or connect with their own ideas in relation to the area of expertise or interest they share with her. While this is beneficial especially to the novice reader, and, therefore, serves an important purpose, the reader—especially a seasoned scholar or practitioner—might also get a sense of wanting critical dialogue, in which the author is the interlocutor raising questions to bring the reader into Peircean doubt or scholarly disequilibrium (topics that Sharp herself addressed, which reveal her debt to American Pragmatist Charles Peirce) and, consequently, to engage critically with the ideas and arguments expressed in her articles. Not only would this encourage further research, but it would appeal to proponents and critics alike, by challenging their views and developing and extending knowledge in the field, which provides an opportunity for widening interest among philosophy of education scholars. This is not to say that the commentaries do not provide any critical analysis. For example, Richard Morehouse draws attention to Chetty and Suissa's (2016) appeal to critical race theory to critique discussions on the community of inquiry, which he argues could develop Sharp's work on caring thinking and education of the emotions. Having said that, there is room for more critical dialogue so that readers can engage 'in community of inquiry with Ann Margaret Sharp'.

On the other hand, as I said earlier, Sharp's scholarship is extensive, and, moreover, the field of educational philosophy (or philosophy functioning educationally as Lipman described it) is only relatively new. Therefore, to expect an anthology of 286 pages, which includes Sharp's own publications, to critically engage with all her ideas,

would be an impossible task. It is, indeed, a major reference work from which all future studies on Sharp can build upon, and I hope this will prove to be so. The anthology certainly deserves a place in university and college libraries, and on the shelves of anyone interested in philosophy for/with children, or more generally philosophy of education.

## References

- Chetty, D (2014) The elephant in the room: Picturebooks, philosophy for children and racism. *Childhood & Philosophy* pp. (19), 11–31.
- Chetty, D & Suissa, J (2016) ‘No go areas’: Racism and discrimination in the community of inquiry. In MR Gregory, Haynes & K Murriss (eds) *The Routledge international handbook of Philosophy for Children* (pp. 11–18). Abingdon, UK Routledge.
- Kohan, W (1995) The origin, nature and aim of philosophy in relation to philosophy for children. *Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children*, 12(2), pp. 25–30.
- Lipman, M & Sharp, AM (1978) Some educational presuppositions of philosophy for children. *Oxford Review of Education*, 4, pp. 85–90.
- Murriss, K (2013) The epistemic challenge of hearing child’s voice. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 32(3), pp. 245–259.
- Murriss, K (2015) Listening-as-usual: A response to Michael Hand. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 34(3), pp. 331–335.
- Rainville, N (2000) Philosophy for children in native America. A post-colonial critique. *Analytic Teaching*, 21(1), pp. 65–77.
- Sharp, AM (ed) (1994) Women, feminism and Philosophy for Children (Special double issue). *Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children*, 11(3&4).
- Sharp, AM (ed) (1997) Women, Feminism and Philosophy for Children (Second special issue). *Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children*, 13(1).
- Thornton, S & Burgh, G (2019) Growing up with philosophy in Australia: Philosophy as cultural discourse. In G Burgh & S Thornton (eds) *Philosophical inquiry with*

*children: The development of an inquiring society in Australia* (pp. 236–249).  
London, UK, Routledge.

Gilbert Burgh

School of Historical and Philosophical Inquiry

The University of Queensland, Australia