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attentiveness, qualities of listening and the listener in the community of philosophical inquiry¹

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abstract

This paper seeks to redress a predominant focus on speaking over listening in theorising the Community of Philosophical Inquiry (CPI). Frequently, where listening is discussed, the focus is on encouraging children to be active listeners. This means of describing the listening that occurs in the CPI has lost some efficacy as the language of active listening has been co-opted as a management technique focussed on making the speaker feel heard with little emphasis on the intentions or outcomes for the listener. Thus, on a cynical reading, 'active listening' can become reduced to performative physical indicators of listening (such as eye contact and body language), overlooking the ethical-epistemic commitments of the genuinely engaged listener. Here, rather than formulating new terms to describe listening, I propose Iris Murdoch's account of *attentiveness* as an apt descriptor of the effects of truly involved listening on the self that seeks to attend to the unfolding content of the CPI and as a way of characterising the qualities of a CPI where such listening is achieved. Here, attentiveness is presented as a concept that captures the unique facets of listening as a challenge to individual participants concerned with contributing effectively to the dialogue as it unfolds within the CPI and those facilitating the dialogue. The paper briefly explores some implications for practice contexts, proposing three interventions to cultivate attentiveness in CPI participants and in facilitators (especially if they are undergraduate or postgraduate in Philosophy because philosophical identities might become a barrier to attentiveness). At its conclusion, this paper repositions listening in the CPI as a productive risk with a particular form of 'aliveness' aptly captured by the term attention.

keywords: listening; inquiry; attentiveness; facilitation; practice.

atentividad, cualidades de la escucha y el que escucha en la comunidad de investigación filosófica

resumen

Este artículo trata de reparar un enfoque predominante en el habla sobre la escucha en la teorización de la Comunidad de Investigación Filosófica (CIF). A menudo, cuando se discute la escucha, se hace hincapié en animar a niñas y niños a mantener una escucha activa. Esta forma de describir la escucha que se produce en la CIF ha perdido parte de su eficacia, ya que el lenguaje de la escucha activa ha sido cooptado como una técnica de gestión centrada en hacer que el interlocutor se sienta escuchado, con poco énfasis en las intenciones o efectos en quien escucha. Así, en una lectura cínica, la "escucha activa" puede reducirse a indicadores performativos físicos de la escucha (como serían el contacto visual y el lenguaje corporal), pasando por alto los compromisos ético-epistémicos de quien escucha genuinamente comprometido. Aquí, en lugar de formular nuevos términos

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attentiveness, qualities of listening and the listener in the community of philosophical inquiry.

para describir la escucha, propongo el desarrollo de Iris Murdoch sobre la atentividad como un descriptor adecuado de los efectos de la escucha verdaderamente participativa en el yo que trata de prestar atención al contenido que se desarrolla en la CIF y como una forma de caracterizar las cualidades de una CIF en la que se logra dicha escucha. Aquí, la atentividad se presenta como un concepto que capta las facetas particulares de la escucha como un desafío para los participantes individuales preocupados por contribuir eficazmente al diálogo a medida que se despliega dentro de la CIF y para aquellos que facilitan el diálogo. Exploramos brevemente algunas implicaciones para los contextos de práctica, proponiendo tres intervenciones para cultivar la atentividad en participantes de la CIF y en facilitadores (especialmente si son estudiantes universitarios o posgraduados en Filosofía, ya que las identidades filosóficas podrían convertirse en un obstáculo para la atentividad). Como conclusión, este artículo resitúa la escucha en la CIF como un riesgo productivo con una forma particular de "vivacidad" que el término atentividad capta adecuadamente.

palabras clave: escucha; investigación; atención; facilitación; práctica.

atentividade, qualidades da escuta e o ouvinte na comunidade de investigação filosófica

resumo

Esse artigo busca reparar o foco predominante na fala, em detrimento da escuta, na teorização da Comunidade de Investigação Filosófica (CIF). Frequentemente, quando as habilidades da escuta estão em debate, o foco é encorajar as crianças a serem ouvintes ativos. Essa forma de descrever a escuta que ocorre na Comunidade de Investigação Filosófica (CIF) tem perdido a eficácia, visto que a linguagem da escuta ativa tem sido cooptada como uma técnica de gestão centrada em fazer o falante se sentir ouvido, com pouca ênfase na intenção e nos efeitos para o ouvinte. Assim, numa leitura cínica, 'escuta ativa' pode ser reduzida a indicadores físicos performativos de escuta (como contato visual e linguagem corporal), ignorando os compromissos éticos-epistêmicos do ouvinte genuinamente engajado. Em vez de formular novos termos para descrever a escuta, proponho aqui a descrição da atenção feita por Iris Murdoch como um descritor adequado dos efeitos no *self* de uma escuta verdadeiramente envolvida, que procura atender ao desdobramento do conteúdo da CIF, e também como uma forma de caracterizar as qualidades de uma CIF em que essa escuta é alcançada. Aqui, a atentividade é apresentada como um conceito que captura as facetas únicas da escuta como um desafio para os indivíduos que participam dela e se preocupam em contribuir efetivamente para o diálogo que se desenvolve ao longo da CIF e para aqueles que facilitam esse diálogo. São exploradas brevemente algumas implicações no contexto prático, propondo três intervenções para cultivar a atentividade nos participantes da CIF e nos facilitadores (especialmente se forem graduados ou pós-graduados em filosofia, porque a identidade filosófica pode se tornar um obstáculo à atentividade). Em sua conclusão, esse artigo reposiciona a escuta na CIF como um risco produtivo, com uma forma particular de 'vivacidade' habilmente capturada pelo termo atenção.

palavras-chave: escuta; investigação; atentividade; facilitação; prática.

attentiveness, qualities of listening and the listener in the community of philosophical inquiry

introduction

When one gives one's whole attention to a wholly beautiful piece of music (and the same applies to architecture, painting, etc.), the intelligence finds therein nothing to affirm or deny. But all the soul's faculties, including the intelligence, become silent and are wrapped up in listening. The listening itself is applied to an incomprehensible object, but one which contains a part of reality and of good. And the intelligence, which cannot seize hold of any truth therein, finds therein nevertheless a food. (Weil, 2014, p. 38)

In a society dominated by the distractions of technology, the enhanced distance between interlocutors caused by the growth of telepresence, and increasing individualism, the difficulty of genuinely listening cannot be overstated. For facilitators delivering Philosophy for/with Children and young people (P4/wC), the success of the dialogue depends on their ability to listen accurately to the conversation as it unfolds.³ Indeed, the challenge of genuinely listening to children has been acknowledged beyond the P4/wC community (Yoon & Templeton, 2019). In P4/wC practices, the burden of listening effectively is carried by the facilitator, who carefully shapes the emerging dialogue, and by the participants, who provide its content in concert. As Lavery has noted, participation in the Community of Philosophical Inquiry (hereafter, the CPI) develops and refines 'listening dispositions' in its participants (Lavery, 2016, p. 54).

The CPI is a form of structured dialogue in which participants "try to employ their best reasoning, their most relevant knowledge, and their most reasonable judgments because all of this is happening publicly, in front of their teacher and their peers" (Lipman, 2003, p. 100). During a CPI, individual members

³ Murris cites Haynes (2007) in order to stress the importance of listening as an educational value exemplified in the work of the P4C facilitator (Murris, 2008).

attentiveness, qualities of listening and the listener in the community of philosophical inquiry.

must think and rethink their response to a specific higher-order question alongside the contributions of their peers (the positions, reasons, examples or analogies offered) to ensure the 'reasonableness' of their judgments. The other contributions may differ radically, informed as they are by the different lived experiences of the respective individuals. This aspect of 'collective reasoning' lends the CPI much of its efficacy (Lipman, 2003, p. 102). CPI participation thus demands not only the careful processing of one's own ideas but the accommodation of differing perspectives and, in the light of these, within the dialogue, either i) the modification of one's position or ii) the acknowledgement of strong dissent to an idea one may defend passionately⁴. Lipman and Sharp claim that regular engagement in CPIs allows participants to test and express their values using their philosophical capacities to build morally satisfying lives (Sharp, 1987, p. 42). Effective inquiry thus demands careful thinking and listening. In practice, facilitators often call this 'active listening.' This term is often introduced during introductory sessions to discuss the behaviour that makes inquiry possible. Active listening's focus on making the speaker *feel* heard fails to capture what effective listening demands of participants and the facilitator in the CPI.⁵

Despite the importance of listening well, facilitators typically focus on the spoken contributions to appraise the dialogue, noting these to chart the development of the inquiry and, by extension the efficacy of their facilitation practice.⁶ Meta-cognitive and reviewing work also focuses closely on things said, discussing powerful reasons or compelling examples offered. This focus on speech tends to see silence, or the act of listening, as a negative space, a cesura, before speaking occurs.⁷ Whilst emphasising spoken contributions might help establish

⁴ The P4w/C has previously been accused of promoting a form of lazy consensus, which undercuts many of the critical thinking benefits its proponents claim it fosters. However, the Deweyan heritage of the CPI entails accepting that judgments made in the CPI are only provisional (Gregory, 2007, p. 75).

⁵ Chetty and Suissa claim 'deep listening' is required for facilitators to persevere with discomfort that may arise within a CPI (Chetty and Suissa, 2016, p. 17). Lyle and Stanley propose that a form of 'responsive listening' can assist in appreciating the philosophical value of contributions by thinkers in the Early Years' classroom (Stanley & Lyle, 2016, p. 54).

⁶ This focus on speech over listening connects to a wider underappreciation of the philosophical value of listening as Fiumara has argued (Fiumara, 2013).

⁷ Such analyses have focussed on, for example, the argument literacy exhibited by the interlocutors in the CPI or the potential of P4C to boost literacy and numeracy.

CPIs as fora in which skills in critical reasoning are exercised or curriculum goals are progressed, overlooking, or oversimplifying listening ignores important inner processes and attitudes that support inquiry participation and facilitation. A fuller articulation of listening in a productive CPI and the demands placed on the listener (both participant and facilitator) may help to identify the unique features of the CPI in contrast to other conversational contexts that occur in the classroom.⁸

This paper contributes to the focus of this special issue on the present and future practice of P4w/C in two ways. Firstly, by focussing on an under-investigated element of philosophical inquiry, namely listening. Secondly, by exploring new connections between the concept of attention and the listening that happens in genuine inquiry. Rather than creating new terms for or taxonomies of the listening occurring in the CPI, this paper uses the concept of ‘attention’ within Gadamer, Weil, and Murdoch to explore the listening that takes place. Of course, listening is not the only element of the CPI that these thinkers might helpfully illuminate. However, it has been selected for focus here to redress an imbalance in the current literature. It concludes that a Murdochian account of attention has much to offer the present and future practice of P4w/C. This paper considers three different relations: speaker and listener, attender and world, and attentive listener and themselves. At the close of this paper, some implications for practice are briefly discussed to chart future avenues for theory, practice, and research.

speaker and listener: openness as necessary for listening

In *Thinking in Education*, Lipman states that the role of ‘attentive listening’ is underappreciated and discusses listening as a prerequisite for ‘accuracy and precision in thinking’ (Lipman, 2003, p. 98). Here, Lipman observes the tendency

⁸ Among these different contexts are: ‘circle time,’ where there is no right to reply to the speaker’s contribution, debate where the goal is to ‘win’ or persuade others by any rhetorical means available or forms of empathy education, where ‘walking in someone else’s shoes’ is brought about by rearticulating their story. In these first two contexts listening appears more accurately in the reductive sense of a pause before speech occurs. i.e. in circle time, I wait for my turn to speak, or in a debate, I listen for those elements of the contribution that I can manipulate to win. This does not mean attentive listening of the type under investigation here *cannot* occur in these contexts. It does, however, mean that the expressed aims and format of these dialogical contexts may be ill-suited or even hostile to attentiveness.

attentiveness, qualities of listening and the listener in the community of philosophical inquiry.

for college students to ‘switch off’ when classmates begin to speak (a phenomenon only exacerbated during the pandemic-induced ‘pivot’ to online learning) as well as the profound rarity of being genuinely heard within conventional schooling (Lipman, 2003, p. 256). To genuinely hear the claims of another both within and beyond the schoolroom entails a particular relation between dialogue partners. Before progressing to an account of attention, I look to hermeneut Hans-Georg Gadamer to understand this relation.⁹ In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer develops Buber’s account of the ‘I/Thou’ relation to describe the delicate balance between interlocutors and how the other conditions the self. Gadamer describes this relation thusly:

The genuine meaning of our finitude or our thrownness consists in the fact that we become aware not only of our being historically conditioned, but especially of our being conditioned by the other. Precisely in our ethical relation to the other, it becomes clear to us how difficult it is to do justice to the demands of the other or even simply to become aware of them. The only way not to succumb to our finitude is to open ourselves to the other, to listen to the ‘thou’ who stands before us. (Gadamer, 2006, p. 29)

Hermeneutic openness demands, according to Gadamer, an acceptance of alterity that permits the other to challenge our existing grasp of states of affairs productively. This means that we must accept that we cannot exhaustively ‘know’ the other or their world experience, nor should we attempt to reduce them only to an ‘it’ an object of scientific knowledge (Gadamer, [1975] 2013, p. 368). Avoiding the reduction of the other to ‘mere means’ (Honneth 2003, p.10) entails an acceptance that: “[T]he hermeneutical experience also has its own rigor: that of uninterrupted listening” (Gadamer [1975] 2013, p. 481). In short, listening begins for the genuine inquirer, not with the first utterance of their interlocutor but with the openness to be challenged by those very contributions. It may be true that ‘[E]ven before we open our mouths we are making meaning together,’ but it is equally the case that before the other has spoken, we may have failed to hear them (Kennedy, 2010, p. 207)¹⁰. Uninterrupted listening is thus, for Gadamer, a radical

⁹ Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics has been productively used to explore the role of questions in the context of P4C by Weber and Wolf and to provide a vocabulary to understand how the CPI unfolds by Kennedy (Weber & Wolf, 2016) and (Kennedy, 1990).

¹⁰ Kennedy discusses the community of gesture as a ‘realm of kinaesthetic meaning’ within which community is founded and through which it is articulated (Kennedy, 1997, p. 67). The affective

openness to the other, that person, text or phenomena with whom we are engaged in dialogue. This openness appears to describe the life in inquiry described by Sharp as the consequence of transforming classrooms into communities of inquiry (Sharp, 2007).

To allow the Other to be valid against oneself – and from there to let all my hermeneutic works slowly develop – is not only to recognize in principle the limitation of one's own framework, but is also to allow one to go beyond one's own possibilities, precisely in a dialogical, communicative, hermeneutic process. (Gadamer 2000, p. 284)

Applying Gadamer's claims to the relationship between interlocutors in CPI permits listening to be recognised as an element of engaging productively in philosophising together that should be prized by facilitator and participant alike. In the penultimate section of this paper, I will claim, perhaps counter-intuitively, that silence about listening is revelatory of an underappreciation of its vital role in ensuring the efficacy of facilitation and the CPI. I will suggest that this shortfall might be remedied through practice interventions in training offered to new facilitators and in the delivery of the CPI. Next, we consider Weil and Murdoch's accounts of attention and its kinship to listening.

Attender and the World: Paying attention, attending and action

Despite James' claim that 'everyone knows what attention is' and a later insistence that it should be the primary focus of good education, attention is difficult to define (James, 1890, p. 403). In school, students are frequently asked to pay attention, and at all levels of education, teachers worry about the 'attention economy' (Lewin, 2014, p. 356). Our task here is to talk about attention as a useful descriptor to characterise the listening in the CPI, which dictates what is salient to this discussion. Like James, Weil claims that attention is the central concern of pedagogical work, yet her passively active attention is akin to listening in interesting ways (Weil, 2002, p.120). Here, two characteristics of Weil's account and their development by Murdoch will be emphasised. Firstly, the relationship

qualities of listening well, the sensation of the aliveness of relation I describe above might be glossed as a part of this gestural community.

attentiveness, qualities of listening and the listener in the community of philosophical inquiry.

between attending and willing, and secondly, attention's effect on our grasp of reality.

Weil's attention is a form of 'suspending thought' rather than a selective cognitive process (Weil, 2009b, p. 111)¹¹ In ordinary language, teachers at all levels instruct their pupils to 'pay attention' demanding their wilful application of concentration in the service of finding the correct answer (Lewin, 2014, p. 358). These moments, like reductive listening approaches, can become performative rather than reflective. Listeners may focus on expressing attentive body language, nodding occasionally, or intently concentrating in search of the 'correct' answer the exclusion of all other content. In contrast, in both her teaching practice and philosophy, attention is less straightforward for Weil.¹² Rather than 'seeking', it requires us to wait 'not for the world to take note of us, but for us to take note of the world' (Zaretsky, 2023, p. 54). According to Weil, attention is achieved not through the will but via a contemplation directed, 'beyond the world' (Weil, 1999, p. 223).¹³ Although for Weil, attention is not a matter of directing the will toward the object of our attention, practice and habit can, she claims, cultivate attention. Practising attention, she hopes, guards against the hasty conclusions made by a mind conditioned towards correct answers or immediate solutions over more profound truths (Weil, 2009b, p.112). This renders contemplative or truth-oriented exercises like a 'sacrament,' possessing both a 'moral and spiritual quality' (Hellman, 2014, p. 85; Weil, 2009b, p. 112).

However, practicing attention should be conflated with ascetic life. Instead, for Weil, attention and its connection to truth should encourage more significant action within the world. In the suppression of the will, and the 'diminution of the self' achieved in attention, compassion for the other is cultivated, and through such compassion, Weil claims the one who attends will be inspired to action (Thomas, 2020, p. 12). Action is thus brought about by the seeing otherwise made

¹¹ Watzl discusses a 'priority structure' account of attention (Watzl, 2023).

¹² Miles includes extracts from recollections of Weil's teaching style at Le Puy including: 'lessons under the shade of a fine cedar tree' (Miles, 2005, p. 12).

¹³ The unfolding of truth here facilitated by attention is reminiscent of Lipman's analogy of the 'indirect' progress of philosophical inquiry like 'a boat tacking in the wind' (Lipman, 2003, p. 21).

possible through an apprenticeship to attention. Via the ‘passive activity’ of attending, new ways of seeing the world can be nurtured (Weil, 2009a, p. 194).

Murdoch develops her account of attention after Weil as a “truth-seeking and truth-discovering attitude and activity,” a description that illuminates its aptness as a way of thinking about the philosophical inquiry (Panizza, 2022a, p. 156). Focussing more explicitly on the moral rather than the spiritual connotations of attention, Murdoch, like Weil, highlights how attention requires a suspension of existing understandings. Murdoch develops the connection between attention and action, claiming that: ‘our ability to act well ‘when the time comes’ depends partly, perhaps largely, upon the quality of our habitual objects of attention’ (Murdoch, [1970] 2014, p. 55).

In *On the Idea of Perfection*, Murdoch provides an instructive account of how others may appear transformed in the light of attending otherwise. In the much-quoted M&D example, M, the mother-in-law, perceives her daughter-in-law anew by focussing on the limits her experience has placed on her perceptions of her daughter-in-law. Initially believing her son has “married beneath him,” M, Murdoch writes, becomes “imprisoned by cliché” (Murdoch, 1999b, p. 312). Her escape becomes possible through ‘just attention.’ M reconsiders D, finding her to be ‘not vulgar but refreshingly simple’ (Murdoch, 1999b, p. 313). Here, we see the role attention plays in recognising limitations without foreclosing on possible alternatives. M sees the limits of her understanding of D but does not, as a result, decide that D must be the opposite of what she initially supposed. Instead, a fuller picture of someone emerges through slow retraining and inner reflection. Like the apprenticeship Weil outlines, Murdoch claims M’s progress toward a more loving conception of the other is an “infinitely perfectible” process (Murdoch, 1999b, p. 317).

Panizza identifies how attention, like listening, appears to be a near constant in our daily lives (Panizza, 2022b, p. 14). We listen to announcements on a crowded train, to the almost audible half-conversation of a person on the phone nearby, to birdsong that begins to punctuate the mornings in the springtime. What differentiates these moments of mundane listening from the listening within the

attentiveness, qualities of listening and the listener in the community of philosophical inquiry.

CPI characterised by the openness to alterity I have outlined above using Gadamer's dialogic account? The kinship between what occurs in the CPI, the account of attention and listening is descriptive and normative. Just as 'good people are attentive, and those aspiring to goodness should aim for greater attention,' judicious inquirers listen well, and those aspiring to inquire more fully must listen more carefully (Panizza, 2022b, p. 18). Commitment to attention, so claim Weil and Murdoch, is a commitment to reality, which requires focusing on that reality rather than ourselves.

We are not isolated free choosers, monarchs of all we survey, but benighted creatures sunk in a reality whose nature we are constantly and overwhelmingly tempted to deform by fantasy. Our current picture of freedom encourages a dream-like facility; whereas what we require is a renewed sense of the difficulty and complexity of the moral life and the opacity of persons. ... Simone Weil said that morality was a matter of attention, not of will. We need a new vocabulary of attention. (Murdoch, 1999a, p. 293.)

Ultimately attention occurs in service of 'the extremely difficult realization that something other than oneself is real' (Murdoch, 1999c, p. 215). For Weil and Murdoch, as for Gadamer and Sharp, this enlarged engagement with the world calls not for an enlargement of the self but a turn away from it. As for Weil, attention is the epitome of generosity, demanding the 'decreation' of the self. Murdoch adapts this idea as Unselfing, a displacement of rather than complete erasure of the self. Next, we consider attentiveness in relation to the CPI and then quelling of the 'blinding and bulimic self' that occurs in applying attention (Zaretsky, 2023, p. 45).

attentive listeners and themselves: attentiveness in the CPI

Ultimately this openness does not exist only for the person who speaks; rather, anyone who listens is fundamentally open. Without such openness to one another, there is no genuine human bond. Belonging together always also means being able to listen to one another. (Gadamer, [1975] 2013, p. 316)

The openness that characterises the hermeneutic interpreter is, thus, far from a passive state. More than the other side of speech, effective listening demands that I, the listener, limit the assumption that I might assimilate an

interlocutor to my own experience as an ‘other I’ or ‘scientific object’ (Gadamer, [1975] 2013, p. 367). This means two things. First, accepting that I cannot assume the others with whom I am in dialogue are ‘just like me’ and the admission that there are elements of their experience that I cannot understand in a thoroughgoing sense.¹⁴ Secondly, I cannot assume that objective knowledge of their experience is open to me through the use of, for example, analytic tools since I approach them from within my unique horizon of meaning. In the acknowledgement that, at any point in our dialogue, those with whom I’m engaged might, at any time, offer a contribution that challenges my closely held beliefs entails a particular form of risk. This risk and its expectation lend energy to the spaces where ‘genuine inquiry’ unfolds (Gardner, 1996).

When I listen to the other, I may find that the identity I’ve strongly cleaved to becomes questioned, my privilege unmasked, or my misunderstandings made apparent. A limited reading, risks misconstruing such realisations as a threat to the self. Kennedy reminds us that in inquiry: “I am faced more and more with my own decisions about *my* truth....as well as having to think more with others because I am more and more aware of the relativity of my truth vis-à-vis the truths of others” (Kennedy, 2004, p. 747). However, as Sharp acknowledges, it is in ‘testing’ the self against the horizon of other interlocutors that self-understanding becomes possible (Sharp, 1996). Characterised as a risk (where my previously held identity might be challenged) and expectation (through the apprehension of the valid claims offered by others), listening has a particular aliveness that needs to be captured. Gadamerian scholar Nicholas Davey characterises hermeneutic listening as attentiveness after Murdoch (Davey, 2013).

A cynic may ask, why attentiveness and not simply ‘active listening’? Although commonly used as a descriptor of listening in the CPI, active listening is now part of common parlance elsewhere. Management strategies that seek to resolve conflicts promptly present active listening means to make the speaker ‘feel’ heard, focussing on the listener's outward presentation. This fails to capture the personal, passive openness of the act of attention potentially reducing listening to

¹⁴ Particularly salient in communities where those of different racial/gender identities, socio-economic profiles or sexual orientations try to grapple with the issue of being othered.

attentiveness, qualities of listening and the listener in the community of philosophical inquiry.

performativity. Each individual in the CPI (participant and facilitator alike) must wrest focus from a matrixial collection of barriers that are ‘peculiarly’ their own in attending to the work of the community (Murdoch, [1970] 2014, p. 56). For instance, a participant may have begun inquiry directly following a playground squabble with another. Likewise, participants and facilitators may be bearers of broader assumptions perhaps articulated by their parents, faith community or wider circle of friends. Mundane facts such as an inquiry taking place before lunchtime or the irksome fact that they’re sitting in a draft can intervene to prevent the listener from attending to others in a fulsome sense. Murdoch’s account of attention here is helpful since it captures attentiveness as means of quelling the immediate demands of the self to understand the world with increased acuity.

Though initially present in Lipman’s *Thinking in Education*, ‘active listening’ may be at risk of either drifting into banality through over-use or becoming reduced to a system of outward signs overlooking the particulars of listening as a distinct internal process that requires a balance of understanding, experience, and intent. Listening actively captures some of the attributes of listening well in the CPI. Among these is the notion that the listener must synthesise ideas and be receptive to linguistic data and perhaps the affective cues available through body language, tone and delivery (Jalongo, 1995, p. 13). However, listening actively has little to say about openness and assuming the value of alterity in developing thinking. In this sense, attentiveness is a valuable addition to understanding the qualities that both the listening that occurs and the listener that undertakes this task should possess.

Murdoch claims that attention is the prerequisite for the moment of the Unself, a space in which the self-referential tendencies of an individual can make way for the ‘real’ to assert itself. For Murdoch, *pace* Weil, attention is a process that shares much with what Lipman and Sharp call ‘caring thinking’ (Lipman, 1995). Attention thus indicates a deep love for the world, prising it not as the source of knowledge for an isolated consciousness but as a rich palimpsest of meaning. Listening as attentiveness then attenuates the atmosphere in the CPI as one of

benevolent tension, made possible by each listener's effort to approach one another with generous expectations. Prioritising attention has curious implications for the selves built through and in dialogue. Again, Murdoch's account is helpful to us here.

identity. self and unself

I am looking outside my window in an anxious and resentful frame of mind, oblivious of my surroundings, brooding perhaps on some damage done to my prestige. Then suddenly I observe a hovering kestrel. In a moment everything is altered. The brooding self with its hurt vanity has disappeared. There is nothing now but kestrel. And when I return to thinking of the other matter it seems less important. And of course, this is something which we may also do deliberately: give attention to nature in order to clear our minds of selfish care. (Murdoch, [1970] 2014, p. 149)

Attentiveness to the world is an attitude that allows the world to address us relevantly. Following Gadamer, we might claim that this is a form of 'self-forgetfulness,' an achievement arising from a thoroughgoing commitment to the matters at issue within the dialogue (Gadamer, [1975] 2013, p. 122). Sharp also utilised the forgetting of the self as a recurring motif to explain the sensation of engagement with the timeless within the CPI (Sharp, 1997, p. 70).

On a reductive reading, this promotes a problematic erasure of the self that countermands the empowerment P4w/C purports to offer. An objection might be formulated as follows: if the CPI is a space that strengthens the ability of its participants to engage with the world beyond its confines critically, then the displacement of the self risks disempowering the very speakers it seeks to embolden. Not so. The moment of the Unself, as described by Murdoch above, does not constitute the complete erasure of the listener. Instead, as Fredriksson and Panizza acknowledge, while held at a distance in attention, the self is understood through its momentary displacement in favour of the concerns and voices of others (Fredriksson & Panizza, 2022).

attentiveness, qualities of listening and the listener in the community of philosophical inquiry.

Murdoch claims attention is the ground from which this moment of the Unself emerges. In this condition, what she calls the 'ego' is in abeyance, permitting reality to be glimpsed by the individual. As a means of overlooking the demands of 'selfish care', attention thus captures the ethical-epistemic relations between speaker and listener described above. Despite the displacement of the ego, attention is constitutive of and by the individual. As Weil and Murdoch claim, habitual practices of attention enable us to be struck by the world in new and interesting ways. (Panizza, 2022b, p. 150) For Sharp, part of the CPI's particular efficacy is in muting the ego to engage deeply with the unfolding dialogue.

Communal Inquiry involves a method for students to be able to 'figure things out' to challenge their naïve, unreflective judgments. With time, participants in such communal inquiry tend to be less wrapped up in their own worlds, less attached to fantasies of how to control others- and life itself. Such communal inquiry provides students with the opportunity to open themselves to the world and to others, to diminish the ego's perpetual self-referencing and wanting. (Sharp, 1996, p. 37)

Sharp, like Murdoch, sees the ego as a barrier to meaningful engagement with the world. In the case of inquiry, she claims that CPI participation enables participants to escape the confines of individualism by listening to the perspectives and lived experiences of others, thus truly gauging the accuracy of their self-perception (Sharp, 1996, p. 36). Although this might seem straightforward in the case of CPI's participants, the robust philosophical ego of the facilitator may be another matter.

implications for practice

With public philosophy modules and programmes that send students into the community as facilitators on the rise, a distinct discussion of how to listen, beyond engagement with facilitation frameworks or moves, may be necessary. As aspiring philosophers, students may cling firmly to their 'scholarly identity', rendering them unable to expect the new from the communities they work with.¹⁵ Where a fragile philosophical ego can impede the student facilitator's ability to

¹⁵ Indeed, this may be equally true of experienced facilitators who assume they can, from the question posed, predict exhaustively the ideal trajectory of the dialogue or character of the participants' contributions.

facilitate attentively, the veteran practitioner can find that their experience is a trap. In cases where facilitators assume they've 'seen it all' through their wealth of experience or believe that a recurring philosophical theme has a limited number of approaches already inscribed in the history of philosophy, their ability to listen attentively to the emergent claims of an individual CPI may be limited. Gadamer's reformulation of experience is instructive:

Rather, the experienced person proves to be, on the contrary, someone who is radically undogmatic; who, because of the many experiences he has had and the knowledge he has drawn from them, is particularly well equipped to have new experiences and to learn from them. The dialectic of experience has its proper fulfillment not in definitive knowledge but in the openness to experience that is made possible by experience itself. (Gadamer, [1975] 2013, p. 403)

I claim that such openness in listening is usefully described as 'attentiveness' in Murdoch's sense. It captures the connection between the listening that occurs in inquiry and the action in the world that Lipman/Sharp's P4w/C hopes to inspire.

Suppose we allow that attentiveness is a valuable tool for understanding both the act of listening and the person of the listener in the community of philosophical inquiry. What are the implications for facilitating, participating in, and managing programmes using this pedagogy? Before concluding, I will briefly discuss three possible practice interventions based on the discussion in this paper. These interventions concern: i) exploring listening within meta-cognitive activities, ii) adjusting attitudes to tension within the community of inquiry, and iii) thinking differently about the role of philosophical experience and the person of the facilitator.

i) exploring listening within dialogue

To overcome overhasty conflation of listening with passivity closely associated with adult-dominated 'transmission models' of education, conversations about the 'feeling' of listening can be an effective intervention in meta-cognitive activities or when debriefing the CPI. Although perhaps more challenging to achieve than activities focussed on dialogic interventions that isolate the efficacy of a particular example or counterexample, or appraise the

attentiveness, qualities of listening and the listener in the community of philosophical inquiry.

robustness of reasons widely endorsed by the community, inviting CPI participants to consider the quality of their listening in the global sense proposed here might open spaces for genuine self-correction and the tough-questions that same process demands (Kennedy, 2010, p. 208).

One helpful model for visualising the affective experiences of listening is through an adaptation of Fletcher's philoso-gram model (Fletcher, 2020). In this technique, developed after White's 'aesthetigramming', participants graphically capture the affective elements of thinking (White, 1998). In the original aesthetigram approach, which is used to record art experiences, interviewers ask a series of questions to the participant to capture embodied responses to a given artwork. Fletcher's philoso-gram model adopts a similar technique to capture the embodied experience of collaborative inquiry. Adapting this technique to focus on attention, can support inquirers in mapping barriers to attending and/or graphically capturing how the experience of listening attentively felt. Inviting participants to consider the embodied sensation of attentive listening and its qualitative difference to other ways of comporting oneself to the inquiry might provide them with tools for recognising successful moments of philosophical reflection that they engage in within and beyond the CPI.¹⁶

ii) accepting tension

Suppose we accept that attentive listening, as Gadamer and Murdoch imply, puts our understanding of the world at risk to the extent that our identity may change. In that case, our descriptions of the CPI should reflect this. In this case, the CPI itself must be considered a space characterised by risk (albeit a productive risk.) Communicating this is essential for those who train future facilitators or promote using the P4C pedagogy. This may call for a jettisoning of phrases such as 'safe space', which connote that disclosures are accepted without a critical appraisal, favouring terms such as brave sharing or open thinking. A change in terminology in this direction might highlight the inquiry's challenge to participants and facilitators. Of course, a simple shift in language alone cannot

¹⁶ Initial use of these techniques within my own practice has been promising. The product of experimenting with these techniques will be the subject of a future paper.

cultivate attentive capacities. But, using more precise terms to describe the inquiry process might avoid assumptions that the path to ‘genuine inquiry’ will be smooth (Gardner, 1996).

iii) questioning experience

Discussions about who *ought* to facilitate the CPI focus predominantly on issues of philosophical acumen and to what extent prior philosophical knowledge and experience can augment facilitation. Proponents of the philosophically erudite facilitator claim that facilitators so educated will speedily recognise questions foundational to philosophy as they are formulated by or arise in their community (McCall & Weijers, 2016). However, the preceding presents us with grounds for pause. The openness demanded by Murdoch’s attentiveness may be threatened by the robust philosophical identity that emerges through conventional philosophical education and specialisation. In this light, ‘fixed’ canonical knowledge can constitute a barrier to hearing novel formulations of questions or accounts of concepts.

Often fragile egos can be the most fiercely defended. Instructors sending eager philosophy undergraduates or postgraduates to schools must be mindful of how we enable them to address their own emerging philosophical identity. Doing so lightly, transparently, and even with levity may empower them to interpret attentively what unfolds in their communities.¹⁷

Inherent in all three provisional suggestions is the claim that honing listening and discussing listening cannot be achieved through preparatory exercises before the ‘serious’ business of inquiring together begins. Instead, repeatedly returning to listening throughout the life of a community and the process of training and mentoring facilitators can resource careful thinking about what stimulates progress within the dialogue and how meaning emerges.

¹⁷ Doing so, requires that instructors develop their own, careful reflective practice which may in turn have i) broader implications for conceptualising academic philosophy and ii) help to outline some minimum practice requirements for academic philosophers integrating P4C into their teaching, but this deeper discussion cannot be accommodated here.

attentiveness, qualities of listening and the listener in the community of philosophical inquiry.

conclusion

As Butnor reminds us, if we are to ‘transform[s] students—too many of whom have internalized the role of passive listener—into active co-inquirers, reflective thinkers, and lifetime learners’ through P4w/C practice, then ‘greater focus on an articulation of the act of listening is required’ (Butnor, 2004, p. 65). Listening in the CPI is more than the passive reception of the contributions of others. Thinking with Gadamer and Murdoch, listening in the CPI requires applying attention judiciously to the contributions of others by facilitator and participant alike. Thus, attentive listening becomes a risky rather than passive activity. It is a skill that, like the effective communication learned through inquiry, can sustain participants as they look for meaning in their lives beyond the dialogue.

The density of this paper reflects the complex problem of considering listening in a collective context. Outward markers can’t always reflect the depth of engagement individuals are engaged in, as Murdoch acknowledges. Likewise thinking about listening requires consideration of the relational context of speaker and listener, the wider context of the classroom as a whole; the potential practical, social and epistemic barriers to name a few. Here, I have thought about attentiveness in the case of the facilitator and the listener together. However, the case of the facilitator and the relationship between their acts of listening and the relationship with the community, as well as the role of silence in facilitation is an area that requires greater investigation and may be a space in which other elements of Weil’s thought in particular may be fruitfully applied.

Attentiveness can be applied fruitfully to the listening that participants and facilitators must do in creative caring and critical philosophical inquiry. Presently, literature speaks of ‘active listening’ as a skill required by the community members but discusses the facilitator’s virtue of ‘responsive listening’, ‘deep listening’ or their ‘philosophical ear.’ Attentiveness, as a conceptual resource provided by the philosophical canon, effectively describes the atmospheric ‘aliveness’ of the participant-to-participant and facilitator-to-participant listening in a fruitful CPI. It highlights the palpable energy at work when, collectively, a

community remains open to new judgements, conceptual definitions or experiential understandings finding articulation. Murdoch's attentiveness acknowledges the unique challenges each individual (as a complex matrix of cultural attitudes, epistemic vantage points and historical knowledge) may face in listening attentively and the productive risk this activity presents to their currently constituted identity. As Splitter and Sharp once wondered about the CPI, there is a concern that, through its overuse or extension to myriad contexts, 'active listening' may have 'degenerated into a mere slogan' (Splitter & Sharp, 1995, p. 18). A return to the resources offered to us by the broader inquiry that is the history of philosophy situates philosophising together in deserved space of parity with the work of the academic philosopher.

'[t]The effort of looking and listening' that Weil charts as the route to our salvation and which for Murdoch contains the possibility of our seeing otherwise and thus our moral improvement bear striking similarities to the radical aims of P4wC as a means of producing 'creative critical and caring citizens of the world' (Sharp, 2004; Weil 2009a, p. 193). The connection between attentiveness and P4w/C is not just another elegant justification for philosophising with others but may be a route to explore P4w/C's more radical implications for participants and facilitators alike.

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