The practice of reasonableness in the secondary classroom

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Abstract

A central task of schooling is to cultivate reasonableness in students. In this chapter we show how the teaching of reasonableness can be practiced successfully in secondary schools, using materials from the Western Australian curriculum. The discussion proceeds in four stages.

We first defend the claim that the teaching of reasonable is a key aim of schooling. Here we offer an account of reasonableness, which we take to be both a skill and a disposition. Students learn reasonableness through the practice of specific skills such as open and curious questioning, clarifying, and categorizing, and evaluating the merits of each contribution toward the problem or question under consideration. Reasonableness comes about as a joint commitment between the individual and the group to be honest in their views, to take care of those views, and for everyone to recognize that each member is a partial bearer of truth.

Secondly, we discuss the pedagogies that cultivate reasonableness. The Philosophical Community of Inquiry is a natural pedagogy for this purpose. This can be supplemented with the thinking tools approach of Cam's *Twenty Thinking Tools* or Harvard Project Zero's Thinking Routines. In addition, we introduce our own two skill-building exercises, the Reasoning Game and the Argument Game.

Thirdly, we show how this approach can be applied not just in Philosophy classes, but in the Humanities and Social Sciences. We argue that our approach brings these subjects to life, it develops understanding and reasonableness, and it bumps up student engagement.

Fourthly, we discuss the assessment of reasonableness. In this type of learning environment, the way students perform in the philosophical community of inquiry is the focus of assessment. The desirable qualities of being reasonable become the assessment criteria for an on-balanced judgment about the student.

Keywords: Reasonableness, Community of Inquiry, thinking skills, thinking routines, Project Zero, assessment.

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“Reasonableness is not pure rationality; it is rationality tempered by judgment”. Matthew Lipman.

1. Reasonableness as a key aim of schooling

Schooling is a complex business, but the cultivation of reasonableness in students is one of its central aims. In this first section we outline how we think reasonableness fits into the educational process.

We find it helpful to distinguish five tasks of secondary schooling. One, to transmit bodies of knowledge to the student. A graduating student should be well grounded in a variety of academic disciplines. Two, to give students an understanding of and practice in basic research skills. Students should know how to find out more than they already know in various fields. Three, to show students how to structure ideas and arguments. This skill is especially demonstrated in essay writing. Four, to help students become competent and skilled presenters of their knowledge and arguments, not just on paper but in live presentations. Five, to cultivate the individual student’s ability to work together with others in a collaborative process. A well-rounded secondary student will be proficient in all five of these aspects of their education. A well-designed upper-level school system will foster all five aspects. A good teacher will practice a pedagogy in which all five are kept in mind.

How does “reasonableness” fit into this picture? It plays a part in all five aspects. One, bodies of knowledge are understood as knowledge, and not just as belief or opinion, because they are reasonable, having stood the tests of time and criticism that disciplines practice. Two, research skills are skills in finding out what is accepted within a given discipline and in adding to the body of knowledge that is the current state of the discipline. Three, the structuring of ideas and arguments is central to the practice of reasonableness. A reasonable person seeks out cogent arguments whenever there are contentious or problematic matters at hand. Four, being articulate in the handling of ideas and arguments requires one to be competent in their presentation in ways that are clear and not confused. Fifth, being reasonable involves working together with others respectfully and cooperatively. In cooperative discussion each member of the group contributes a part to the whole and learns with and from the other members, while also exercising critical judgment on the group’s performance.

What is reasonableness? It is important to think of reasonableness as both a skill and a disposition. We take our cue from Matthew Lipman’s point that “Reasonableness is not pure rationality; it is rationality tempered by judgment” (2003: 11). For him schools need to be reasonable institutions

where curriculum and pedagogy is open to discussion and rationally defensible. A central feature of reasonableness is being able to articulate the function or purpose of something in human life. For someone to be reasonable requires the ability to justify the ends or the purpose. Being reasonable is an activity which we do together, and we do it to establish knowledge and understanding, which we think is at the core of good judgment.

In any inquiry we conduct research, formulate arguments, and present them to peers. The aim is always to make clear some end or purpose or relevance to human life. Thus, it is not the case that the end or purpose or relevance of something is delivered via pure reasoning from uncontestable "facts" derived from explicit instruction. This is a popular rendering of being reasonable and assumes that clarity and truth are neatly packaged and accessed in a state of logical and empirical tranquility. The reality of being reasonable is much messier than that. "Approximations are needed, and we have to develop a sense of the appropriate rather than expect our thought and the shape of things to correspond exactly" (Lipman, 2003:21). What is the case and what we think is the case are not always the same. In essence, this is what we have experienced in the classroom. Most of the time we operate with limited knowledge. We fill in gaps. We struggle with contestability, and we respond to it through research so that we can shape our positions and present our arguments.

We each become convinced by a point of view that we bring to the Inquiry, knowing well enough that some of what we have brought will be challenged and changed. In plain terms, we put our faith in the wisdom of the group. This is the hallmark of Community of Inquiry as a philosophical practice, making it an excellent medium for cultivating reasonableness. One naturally learns to be reasonable through trial and error, in the company of others and by disagreement, so that being reasonable is something one becomes only through the mill of collective understanding of one's peers. Learning through trial and error, by disagreement, in this way, is an experiential and dialectical process, making the Community of Inquiry the most fit pedagogy for the classroom by virtue of its design and purpose.

Why be reasonable? The straight answer is to learn to persuade and be persuaded because we rarely survey the whole terrain of a topic without some bias. We like to believe we have a complete picture, and yet we rarely find ourselves in complete agreement with our peers. In the world of facts or bodies of knowledge, there is much uncertainty, and so we must find ways to nudge ourselves together a little closer to truth. As John Stuart Mill observed (1975:44-45), we are each only part bearers of the truth, and it is only through disagreement and discussion that we come closer to a fuller sense of the whole truth, if not the whole truth. Adults know this. Students know this too and do this quite naturally with their peers in their development as moral agents throughout adolescence. There are always open questions, and they generally outnumber the closed questions

students are forced to consider in typical curriculum and assessment, or even in daily life. Ask a student what questions they have about the content being taught and it does not take long for an open question to arise and push certainty away. This is especially true in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

In this climate, should the teacher allow a candid conversation about open questions around content? Should the teacher open up the classroom to disagreement and discussion about the purpose of the content, entertaining the particular views of each student? If one does, then one finds out some revealing things, such as the tendency for students to want to be comfortable in the world of facts and feel at a loss when that slips away. Some cope by switching off, ignoring the uncertainty which they know will finish when the bell rings the end of the period. Some are keen to be reasonable but not skilled in being so. Young children are often like this. Some can also be skilled but not disposed to be reasonable, as is sometimes the case with teenagers when they argue for an individual good rather than a common good.

Students of secondary school age tend to have a particular view about knowledge and its value. As Kuhn (2008:32) puts it:

> By adolescence a radical change in epistemological understanding is likely to emerge. In a word, everyone now becomes right. The discovery that reasonable people – even experts – disagree is the likely source of adolescents recognizing the uncertain, subjective aspect of knowing. This recognition initially assumes such proportions, however, that it eclipses recognition of any objective standard that could serve as a basis for evaluating conflicting claims. […] At this multiplist (sometimes called relativist) level of epistemological understanding, knowledge consists not of facts but of opinions, freely chosen by their holders as personal possessions and accordingly not open to challenge. Knowledge is now clearly seen as emanating from the knower, rather than the known, but at the significant cost of any discriminability among competing knowledge claims.

In order to respond to this “epistemological understanding”, classrooms need to be environments in which both the skill and the disposition to be reasonable is cultivated. The discipline most closely associated with reasonableness is Philosophy. Here, however, we contend that reasonableness can and should be practiced in all classroom settings, whether or not it is explicitly a Community of Inquiry and whether or not it is in a Philosophy class. We recognize that the teaching of Philosophy is a rarity in most school systems, and we accept that Community of Inquiry is a minority form of pedagogy. We contend, nevertheless, that reasonableness is central to good classroom practice and that open questions should be entertained and explored with the aim of cultivating familiarity with

uncertainty, contestability, persuasion, and judgment. It should be modelled by the teacher and rewarded as part of good student performance. We are fond of Lipman's use of the term "conversational apprenticeship" (2003:24) because the notion of an apprenticeship emphasizes the experiential and dialectical learning of specific skills and dispositions required to apply them with excellence in the practice of being reasonable.

We think that the reasonable classroom should conduct itself in the manner of a conversation and allows students the time to learn, apply, and struggle with the skills and dispositions of being reasonable. This does students justice in two ways. Firstly, it gives them the confidence to handle uncertainty better in their academic lives, particularly when an open questions arrives and creates the feeling of havoc or being stuck in a world of facts. Secondly, it prepares them for life beyond school where the uncertainty is greater and often more profound, and the capacity to be reasonable, as both a skill and disposition, inspires the confidence to find certainty or its closest approximation.

For the purposes of the present chapter, this entails three kinds of inquiry. Firstly, we should be explicit about what counts as being reasonable in a secondary school classroom setting. Secondly, we should be able to demonstrate how it is practiced in a variety of disciplinary areas. Thirdly, we should show how good performance can be assessed. In the following sections we discuss each of these in turn.

2. The practice of being reasonable in the classroom

The experience of open questioning is indispensable when learning how to be reasonable. Open questions initiate students into uncertainty and contestability. Managing and responding to uncertainty and contestability is the main reason why we need to be reasonable. In schools, the teacher should model the way such questions are raised and addressed. We think this is the best way to enter a conversational apprenticeship. Teachers should use the open question as the switch into a suitable pedagogy for teaching and learning how to be reasonable.

Open questions will include the recollection of content, but they prompt more from students. Students dive from an open question into murky waters and need to find relevant similarities between things so that a well-understood thing serves to illustrate the workings and purpose of a less understood thing. Analogical thinking also paves the way for another important feature of being reasonable, the act of categorizing where the known unknown might sit in the order of things. Open questions also prompt the need for a disposition that is relevant to being reasonable, such as

reflecting or being considered or being polite by listening to another rather than satisfying an impulsive need to cut him or her short with your latest thought.

It is the skill of using an analogy, of comparing and contrasting and categorizing, and the disposition of being considered or polite or reflective that the teacher models as students are being inducted into reasonableness. Open questions prompt the use of more specific types of questioning, such as using questions to clarify what has been said, or questions to evaluate the relevance of a contribution to the direction of the conversation.

We think the best way to practice the complexity and power of open questions in the classroom is to play two intellectual games. The first we will call the Reasoning Game and the second the Argument Game. Both games are built on the principles of open questioning and collaborative, conversational learning between the students and the teacher. They involve the teacher explicitly teaching the basic parts of an argument (conclusion, premises and inferences), the contestability of both the claim and its support, and the degree of its persuasiveness or cogency given the uncertainty that remains. The teacher may choose reasonable strategies or thinking tools to help achieve this aim. Examples can include the suite of relevant thinking tools from Philip Cam's *Twenty Thinking Tools* (2006) or Harvard Project Zero's *Thinking Routines* (2016).

The Reasoning Game involves students playing with the nuts and bolts of an argument in two ways. Firstly, they identify the parts of a simple argument in an example provided by the teacher and evaluate the relevance and the strength of those parts to determine the persuasiveness or cogency of the argument. We define a simple argument as an example consisting of one conclusion, one inferential move and one premise or perhaps two or three premises if linked together. Secondly, using the teacher's example as the model, students' team up to construct their own examples, playing with the parts of an argument in a creative and critical manner. Students may create a similar argument in terms of strength and relevance on a different topic, or they may try to improve the teacher's example after the collective evaluation of its persuasiveness or cogency.

The students' own examples will then undergo critical evaluation by way of open questioning from their peers, which the teacher facilitates in order to ensure that students follow their own arguments, through trial and error, where they lead, suggesting possible strategies students could employ to help scaffold their thinking. For instance, students may employ the "What Makes You Say That?" Thinking Routine or the "Claim Support Question" Thinking Routine as they zoom in on the relevant criteria. Cam's Thinking Tools also focus on relevant criteria (see Figure 1). Students may map or diagram their arguments as part of the evaluation, and they may look closely at the reasons for agreement or disagreement in their evaluations. They may also consider examples of simple

arguments that present some common fallacies such as attacking the man or ad hominem, misrepresenting a position or straw man, or drawing impulsively a conclusion from small evidence or a hasty generalization.

We have found that instructing students to create their own examples of common fallacies based on examples modelled by the teacher to be highly successful and to generate much joy, which we have noted bumps up student engagement. We have also on occasion instructed students to turn cogent arguments into fallacies or fallacies into cogent arguments. The practice of doing so is a conversational apprenticeship in the skills and dispositions of being reasonable, which is the key aim.

EVALUATIVE TOOLS	REASONING TOOLS	TRACKING TOOLS
Reasons	Generalisation	Discussion Maps
Agreement/Disagreement	Deductive Reasoning	
Counterexamples	Reasoning Diagrams	
Examples	Assumptions	
	Disagreement Diagrams	

Figure 1: Relevant Thinking Tools for the Reasoning Game (adapted from Cam, 2006)

The Argument Game follows the same format as the Reasoning Game. What is distinctly different is that an argument constructed in the Argument Game is more complex due to the different positions that students can take when presented with a proposition. Because this is so, the Argument Game is more focused on the acceptability of claims being made, prompting the use of evaluative thinking tools such as the ones suggested in Figure 2 or any of the Core Thinking Routines available online at Harvard Project Zero's Thinking Routine Toolbox (2016). Once the contestability has been considered and reasonable positions have been formed, it is then possible for students to consider the mechanics of their arguments, such as inference strength or support, in order to shape and strengthen their positions.

QUESTIONING TOOLS	HYPOTHESISING TOOLS	TRACKING TOOLS
The Question Quadrant	Suggestions	Discussion Maps
Fact, Value, Concept		
Agendas		
CONCEPTUAL TOOLS	META-INQUIRY TOOLS	
Distinctions	Thumbs	

Borderline Cases Target Thought Experiments Criteria		

Figure 2: Relevant Thinking Tools for the Argument Game (adapted from Cam, 2006)

As with the Reasoning Game, in the Argument Game the teacher models the first round. For example, take the following question:

> Question
>
> Our obligations to those outside of our own society are no different from the obligations we have to those within our society.
>
> (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2020:22)

The question requires students to build an argument either for or against the proposition. Clearly the question has more than one possible good answer. The first thing the class should do is brainstorm together all those possibilities and the teacher begins by modelling aloud some options and their reasons. Once completed, the next move for the class is to group and categorize the brainstorm so that positions start to form, and students can then proceed with the task of taking each position and constructing premises or reasons out of the brainstormed ideas. Again, the teacher talks through his or her ideas and reasoning, inviting students to take up the process with further examples of their own. Students will need to consider carefully whether or not their position is for or against the conclusion (the original question) before they proceed with the building of an argument. Depending on how many positions or possible arguments emerge from the brainstorm, the teacher can instruct students to work in pairs or small groups on all of them or invite students to work collaboratively on any one of them, making sure (if time permits) that all positions are covered. When the time comes for students to present their arguments to their peers, the class must have the opportunity to evaluate the acceptability of all the positions that emerged from the brainstorm.

This process is collaborative and conversational. Each strategy itself operates through open questioning to cultivate reasonableness. Cam's Question Quadrant, a popular thinking tool in Australian classrooms, can be adapted to organize ideas from the brainstorm into relevant categories. The teacher can facilitate the first round of questioning. Which brainstormed ideas are

closed ideas? Which are open ideas? Do they support a position? How do they support a position? Do they need research? Can reason and imagination helps us speculate and understand how they work to support the position?

The act of sorting out ideas is heavily dependent on successful questioning and collaboration between students. Questions enable students to compare, contrast, and make connections. This process of sifting and sorting and shaping premises, facilitated by the teacher, opens up uncertainty and contestability and enables students to explore borderline cases, as well as agreement and disagreement, to cultivate a reasonable understanding of the support the premise needs to provide. This will in turn strengthen their understanding of their argument so that they may confidently accept their peers' evaluative criticism with a reasonable measure and a reasonable response.

Another approach might see the teacher queue up the following Thinking Routines: See Think Wonder, Circle of Viewpoints, Claim Support Question, Connect Extend Challenge, What Makes You Say that? and I Used to Think … Now I think (Project Zero, 2016). This sequence of routines allows for a structured progression of collaborative and conversational thinking with the aim of being reasonable. Thinking Routines themselves simply scaffold thinking in an accessible and visible manner through open questions (Perkins, 2003). Ideally, over time, students ought to be aware of a suite of routines and tools for thinking at their disposal and select whatever they need accordingly. As a test of being reasonable, students ought to be able to explain and justify the choice of tools or routines to the class, further enriching their conversational apprenticeship.

We end this section with an observation by Deanna Kuhn (2008:28): "Students readily experience and appreciate [the] value [of inquiry and argument] as they engage in them and gain mastery of the skills they entail. They are empowering. Once they are found useful in pursuing individual and collective goals, no further incentive is needed for practicing and perfecting the skills they entail".

3. Being reasonable in a discipline

In this section we seek to demonstrate how reasonableness is practiced in a disciplinary setting, that of the Humanities and Social Sciences.

Uncertainty and the consequent need for open questioning commonly occur in the Humanities and the Social Sciences. The disciplines grouped under these umbrellas have human goods as their end and purpose. As we stated in the first section, being able to articulate the function or purpose of something in human life is a central feature of being reasonable, and so being reasonable requires the ability to justify the ends or purposes of many forms of human social practices. Cultivating the ability to do this is the ultimate aim of schooling, and the ability to do this collaboratively is a key

virtue. We agree with Howard Gardner that we should "crave human beings who understand the world, who gain sustenance from such understanding, and who want – ardently, perennially – to alter it for the better" (2000:19-20). This requires an education which goes beyond the narrow focus of the repetition of facts and the standardized testing of achievement. As he contends, education should be "a virtues-filled education in the disciplines" and should involve the development of the whole person (2000:32-35). Because of this, education must involve the practice of skills and the cultivation of dispositions that make reasonableness possible and relevant.

To make this more concrete, consider some examples from the Western Australian Curriculum in the Humanities and Social Sciences. The curriculum document itself contains many opportunities to practice conversational learning and the art of being reasonable. Our focus is the Year 7 to 10 Scope and Sequence of content (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2017:46-50). Browsing through the mandated content, one can see the typical raw materials from which teachers build programs, anchored in textbooks from major publishers. Typically, this content is sequenced and stepped out in a week-by-week manner, with explicit instruction in content doing the heavy lifting of learning. We have here the familiar image of teaching as a practice based on a board to emphasize content and key points or relationships, and the students attentively taking notes and answering closed questions to test for understanding. This is fine and necessary for some of the curriculum content, most notably the accepted facts. But not all of the curriculum content is accepted fact.

Many instances of curriculum content are "big ideas", and big ideas are best understood when explored through open questions and conversation. Big ideas require one to be reasonable. It is interesting to note that the two pages that follow the curriculum content map out the agreed skills in the Humanities and Social Sciences (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2017:51-52). These skills fit neatly with our examples of the skills and dispositions we have raised in this discussion on reasonableness and its pedagogies. In fact, it can be said that any opportunity for conversational learning in the classroom enables students to practice these mandated curriculum skills, as well as sharpening their ability to be reasonable through open questioning and a pedagogy such as Community of Inquiry. Furthermore, we believe that the mandated skills in the Western Australian Curriculum for Humanities and Social Sciences covers the explicit criteria of being reasonable, of what we expect students to be able to do as young adults and citizens with a healthy respect for truth, beauty and good. In the grand scheme of things, this is the purpose of education in liberal societies.

Let us offer some examples of big ideas in the Western Australian curriculum for Humanities and Social Sciences. The aim is, of course, to show how reasonableness is a practice with specific and explicit criteria: questioning, researching, analyzing, evaluating, reflecting, and communicating ideas

to others, as identified and elaborated in the Scope and Sequence of the curriculum document (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2017:51-52). We believe that modelling the process of open questioning to the students is the best way to proceed. This is particularly true for a class new to conversational learning, or a new class at the beginning of an academic year. The teacher's primary objective is to make the climate in the room safe for students to take intellectual risks with open questions and ideas among their peers.

We believe this is crucial. Without modelling open questioning as a safe practice, no conversational learning will take place. In fact, when it comes to conversational learning, students will initially distrust the milieu the teacher is trying to establish, and for good reason. Students are simply not prepared to risk their reputation. Answering an open question is risky business. One might look foolish because one gets the answer wrong and so the perception of being incompetent is enough to make one suffer as a result. Whether or not that perception is real is not the point. Perceptions of incompetence is enough to make someone feel unsafe, which ruins the possibility for trust that is so crucial to the process. As Thomas Hobbes made clear in *Leviathan*, distrust is one of the three key elements that leads to discord and conflict, along with competition and the pursuit of glory. Now it is simply the case that the typical culture of a school encourages the latter two elements, competition and glory, in classrooms and assemblies, which automatically fosters the potential for the erosion of trust. So how does the teacher achieve a safe climate in the classroom? The act of thinking aloud, particularly wondering, does the trick, but the teacher needs to be prepared to commit to frequent repeats of the process to establish the feeling of safety in their students. Open questioning needs to be approached as a performance, orchestrated in such a way that the teacher's own knowledge becomes the object of an open questioning for students to see.

Consider the following example from the Year 7 curriculum in Geography. The focus is "Place and Liveability":

- The factors that influence the decisions people make about where to live and their perceptions of the liveability of places
- The influence of accessibility to services and facilities on the liveability of places
- The influence of environmental quality on the liveability of places
- The strategies used to enhance the liveability of places, especially for young people, including examples from Australia and Europe

(School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2017:48)

Each piece of the curriculum is well-supported through textbooks, providing a plethora of content to teach, with a structured focus on the annual report, *The Liveability Index*, published by the Economist Intelligence Unit. However, while this addresses Geography content and disseminates facts, it ignores the big idea in the room. Why does this matter? Underpinning this question further are the seven geographical concepts in the Western Australian curriculum that fundamentally invite open questioning and conversational learning. The seven geographical concepts are place, space, environment, interconnection, sustainability, scale, and change, each of which can, in various combinations with the other concepts, prompt open discussions about the kinds of concerns and comparison raised in the study of liveability. After explicit instruction in content or knowledge about liveability and the Index, the teacher might start thinking aloud. “I find all this really fascinating but I am not sure why. Can you help?” The students might shift around uncomfortably. Some may even look incredulous. How can the font of knowledge be so troubled?

Priming the pump, the teacher continues to pose more open questions that deliberately interrogate the importance of the knowledge they possess. The teacher does so not to undermine it but to foreground its value and the possible reasons for the value. The teacher might ask for more direct help from the students by being more strategic with the open questions. “Should we rank cities?” “What is the benefit?” “Why should economics concern itself with quality of life and the value of space and place?” The aim of course is to provoke thought and hook an answer. Perhaps the teacher provides an answer to their own open question. “Maybe we rank cities so we can find out how to make more money.” “But why would we do that?” And so on. We think the most important aspect of this performance is to demonstrate the naturalness of not knowing or not being sure and the excitement of discovering why humans might do what they do.

The open questioning of curriculum content, especially the big ideas, is also a good opportunity to build a climate of safety in the classroom through pedagogies for thinking. Thinking strategies and thinking tools need to be used to scaffold and support the process of open questioning to develop comfort and trust. Whichever pedagogy is used to do this is up to the teacher. The aim is to promote and support conversational learning. For example, the teacher could set up a Philosophical Community of Inquiry using an appropriate stimulus material that provokes open questions about living environments, quality of life and their moral importance. The teacher could instruct their students to complete a Plus-Minus-Interesting (PMI) to structure a dialogic classroom and use the PMI as the stimulus material for conversational learning.

For the teacher who feels comfortable with Thinking Routines, an appropriately selected sequence of routines such as Options Explosion, Circle of Viewpoints, and Think Puzzle Explore, can pry open the questions in a structured and scaffolded manner, building up the necessary feeling of safety

along the way. Students could begin a conversation in the Philosophical Community of Inquiry before breaking out into small groups to complete relevant Thinking Routines before reconvening in the circle of the Community. Here they would share and build ideas about the big idea and the topic, and so build understanding through explaining and justifying their positions on a mandated curriculum point such as "The factors that influence the decisions people make about where to live and their perceptions of the liveability of places" (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2017:48).

There are many other opportunities for this flexible yet structured approach to big ideas in the Western Australian Curriculum for Humanities and Social Sciences, and thus many opportunities to practice the explicit criteria of the skills identified in the Scope and Sequence and Appendix 2 (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2017:51-52 and 114-116). For example, in Year 8 History, there is room to open up questions and conversations on "The effects of the Black Death on Asian, European and African populations, and conflicting theories about the impact of the plague" (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2017:50). In Year 9 Civics and Citizenship, students could discuss in a Community of Inquiry "The factors that can undermine the application of the principles of justice (e.g. bribery, coercion of witnesses, trial by media, court delays)" (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2017:46), with a particular focus on why justice is important to human life. Or in Year 10 Economics and Business, students can practice being reasonable on "The distribution of income and wealth in the economy and the ways in which governments can redistribute income (e.g. through taxation, social welfare payments)" (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2017:47), particularly the reasons why and the moral and economic benefits that may follow. As we said at the start of this section, these disciplines have as their modus operandi human goods in mind, and so it is important to reiterate that, "Without such understanding, people can not participate fully in the world in which they – *we* – live" (Gardner, 2000:18). We believe that this holds true for curriculum in other jurisdictions too.

4. Being reasonable in assessment

Lastly, we consider what kind of assessment best suits the teaching and learning of reasonableness.

It is perhaps tempting to write content-based assessment after your students have thought together and struggled with open questions, opinions, and reasons. We think this does happen, but we also believe that this would not honor what has been achieved in the practice of thinking together or being reasonable or being engaged in a process of conversational learning. A content-based assessment such as a short answer test may give you an accurate picture of your students' abilities

to explain content, but it is not that different from testing for content knowledge via multiple choice. What we are after, if we are to honor the practice we have worked hard to establish, is to find out what it means for a student to explain themselves in a collaborative manner, what it means to be reasonable in a context of uncertainty and contestability, rather than finding out how correct they are in a static climate of facts. Content-based assessment will give the teacher information, but no information whatsoever about the students' ability to argue or explain and whether a student is being reasonable as they do so.

The Western Australian Curriculum document provides a table of suggested assessment strategies from which we have selected ones we deem suitable for assessing conversational learning and reasonableness:

Examples of assessment strategies	**Examples of sources of evidence**
Observation	Ongoing and first-hand observations of student learning, documented by the teacher (can be conducted both informally and formally)
Group activities	Cooperative activities that provide opportunities for individual and peer-learning. During group work, teachers should stop at key points to check individual student understanding.
Performances or oral presentations	The demonstration of learning in practical performance, role-play, speeches, simulations, debates and structured discussions.
Peer assessments	Individuals, peers or a group of peers provide evaluative feedback on performance or activity.

Figure 3: Relevant strategies for judging student performance on explicit criteria of conversational learning and being reasonable (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2017:16).

Conversational learning, grounded in Philosophy, is performance-based and each suggested strategy above accommodates this. For example, whether peer-assessed or teacher-observed or both, students must demonstrate the skill set associated with arguing for a claim or explaining a position. These two skills, philosophical argument and philosophical explanation, underpin the pedagogies we have discussed as examples of conversational learning and being reasonable. The Philosophical

Community of Inquiry is probably the best example of philosophical argument and philosophical explanation in action because it comes directly out of the discipline of Philosophy, through the work of Lipman. Its function or purpose is to induct students into the practice of thinking together and to scaffold it through stimuli, typically narratives, that provoke open questioning, explanation, and justification. This involves demonstrating two complex skills, philosophical argument and philosophical explanation, in a performance, and the criteria that makes up the marking key or rubric. Where does one find these criteria?

We think that the Scope and Sequence of Humanities and Social Science skills in the Curriculum document (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2017:51-52) offers direction on the criteria in a marking key. To further help refine such a marking key, the teacher can also draw upon the Critical and Creative Thinking capability or the Ethical Understanding Capability for words that will describe the performative distinctions on the criteria. For example, assessing the questioning and researching skills in the Humanities and Social Sciences Scope and Sequence could lead the teacher to mine the organizing elements of Inquiring or Generating Ideas in the Critical and Creative Thinking capability (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2022). Or it could lead the teacher to mine the organizing elements of the Ethical Understanding capability for the relevant language to describe and assess distinctive differences in student performance (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2022). Whatever the case, assigning appropriate points to each criterion will result in a total score that suggests the standard of reasonableness the student has achieved. But of course, the accuracy of that judgement depends entirely on the appropriateness of the criteria, particularly the wording of the performative distinctions, that make up the marking key.

The teacher can assess student performance in the Community of Inquiry directly too. There are examples of assessment rubrics available online, though we think two papers in particular step out the criteria of being reasonable in a clear way that we think will appeal to teachers (Ng, 2013; Piric, 2014:22-24). But the criteria of philosophical argument and philosophical explanation in a Community of Inquiry will be different from the use of these criteria in a sequence of Thinking Routines or a sequence of specific Thinking Tools, even if they have thinking together in common. Whatever pedagogy the teacher uses to scaffold the conversational learning, the marking key for the assessment of being reasonable must marry the distinctive features of that pedagogy with the explicit criteria of being reasonable. For example, assessing student performance on two Thinking Routines will involve constructing a marking key or rubric that accommodates their specific criteria. The “What Makes You Say That?” Routine will provide the teacher with the opportunity to assess student performance on the criteria of philosophical argument, and “Circle of Viewpoints” will allow

for the assessment of student performance on the criteria of philosophical explanation. And both combined in a sequence provides students with the opportunity to engage in open questioning and conversational learning.

Assessing a performance like reasonableness is not an easy task but is it not impossible. Drawing on the ideas of John Hattie (2011) and Dylan William (2011), we believe that providing students with explicit criteria and feedback in the assessment of reasonableness, frequently fine-tuned through a teacher's reflective practice, will definitely help students to progress and increase the effect of the thinking pedagogies or strategies employed. From the point of view of the student, knowing the criteria, experiencing them in action, and understanding them from the practice of conversational learning, is epistemologically good because there is no better way to learn how to be reasonable than to do it and know what you are meant to be doing.

Each pedagogy for teaching and learning how to be reasonable will have its distinct truth, beauty and good in the form of assessment criteria unique to each. They are "thin" concepts, concepts that need the context, method, and criteria of a pedagogy to become specifically meaningful. A good or true or beautiful performance in one strategy or skill is not the same as another, so the differences of each must reflect what good, true, or beautiful will look like in a student's performance. In the world of assessment, this approach is known as analytical marking or the construction of analytical marking keys. The unique and explicit criteria of a pedagogy, observable and described in the marking key, shapes the way conversational learning is assessed. So, the truth, goodness, or beauty of any criterion are the ideals we have in mind when we judge a student's ability to explain or argue philosophically in a classroom of conversational learning.

5. Conclusion

A central feature of reasonableness is being able to articulate the function or purpose of something in human life, and to do so through bodies of knowledge, basic research skills, structured ideas and arguments, clear presentations, and working collaboratively. We mostly operate with limited knowledge, struggle with contestability, and respond with researched but inconclusive positions and arguments. In the Philosophical Community of Inquiry, students learn to persuade and be persuaded so that they can get a little closer to truth.

Reasonable contestability is especially common in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Central to good classroom practice is breeding familiarity with issues involving uncertainty, contestability, persuasion, and judgment. Exploring open questions teaches us to be reasonable because open questions include content recollection while prompting more from students. We have argued that a

valuable way to practice open questions in the classroom is to play two games, the Reasoning Game and the Argument Game. In addition to this, the teacher may choose reasonable strategies or thinking tools such as the Philosophical Community of Inquiry, Philip Cam's Twenty Thinking Tools, or Harvard Project Zero's Thinking Routines in an appropriate sequence for structured and visible thinking. The aim is always to enrich the students' conversational apprenticeship.

We agree with Gardner that the aim of education is cultivating the whole person through truth, beauty, and goodness, and that education should be virtues-oriented in the study and practice of the disciplines. The curriculum content of the Humanities and Social Sciences includes "big ideas". We argue that these big ideas are best understood when explored through open questions and conversation. In simple terms, big ideas require one to be reasonable, and big ideas require conversational learning with the teacher modelling open questioning to establish a safe intellectual practice in the classroom.

Lastly, if we are to honor the practice of conversational learning, we must assess what it means for a student to explain, to collaborate, and to be reasonable in an environment of uncertainty and contestability. Conversational learning, grounded in Philosophy, is performance-based and assessment must reflect this. We point out that curriculum documents offer direction on the kind of criteria teachers can use in a marking key, and we gave the Western Australian Humanities and Social Sciences curriculum as an example. Knowing the criteria, experiencing the criteria, and understanding the criteria through conversational learning are epistemologically healthy. There is no better way to learn how to be reasonable than to practice it and know what you are meant to be doing.

> "To produce individuals who can thrive in and contribute maximally to a democratic society, we need to ensure they develop the intellectual skills needed to inquire and to argue, individually and collectively, and to value these activities as the soundest path to achieving goals, solving problems, resolving conflicts, and maximizing individual and group welfare." Deanna Kuhn.

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