EMMANUEL LEVINÀS AND MATTHEW LIPMAN: TOWARDS A CRITIQUE OF THE TOTALIZING TENDENCY IN FORMAL EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

In this article, I argue that education should neither function simply as a social apparatus that "grooms" individuals for their future societal roles nor merely supply the need of the global labor market. Rather, borrowing from Levinàs' *ethics,* education must ultimately respond to the call of justice that springs from the proper recognition of the *alterity* of the other, and the responsibility that goes along with it. I further argue that a totalizing tendency of Formal Education occurs on two-level interactions: a.) the basic interaction between all the participants in the education system, and b.) the interaction of the students with the school curricula. It is in this context that I introduce Matthew Lipman's version of the *Community of Inquiry,* which, I propose, is one of the many effective pedagogical practices that respond to the call for an ethically driven Formal Education.

Introduction

In *Democracy and Education,* Dewey outlines the inevitability of education in the preservation of the biological and social life of any group of people. He argues "the primary ineluctable facts of the birth and death of each one of the constituent members in a social group determine the necessity of education".[1] The transmission of a particular social group's beliefs, ideals, symbols, tradition and even language from one generation to the next is by all means necessary in preserving and securing the continuity of life, culture and identity. Even the skills and methods in physical sustenance have to be acquired under the guidance and supervision of an elder, which in most cases, a role assumed by the parents. What this means is that even prior to the emergence of modern social institutions, relationships that are essentially pedagogical are primordial among members of social groups as they manifest in the most basic human encounters such as between parents and children, siblings and family relatives. In other words, pre-institutionalized human encounters carry with it an inevitable trait of education. However, it may be well to note that the educational merit of these encounters is incidental, that is, subsidiary to the primary aims of a social group which center on survival, adaptation and propagation. This means to say that insofar as human beings are inherently rational and social, the propensity to observe, adapt, generalize, apply and analyze using the usual modes of induction, deduction and trial-and-error are natural and expectable for the greater purpose of the social group. These and the many other forms of learning with and among the other members of a social group are basically referred to as modes of *informal* education.

Formal Education, on the other hand, is the "deliberate educating of the young" which is analogous to the natural occurrence of learning by interacting and living with the other members of a society.[2] As societies advance, it becomes increasingly difficult to teach the young simply through the direct transmission of knowledge and skills as would have sufficed in the pre-modern social group interactions. The necessity to

train individuals to specifically teach the young, the agencies devised to specifically organize the pedagogical process, and the materials that are indispensable in the modes of instruction become more systematized and organized.

Formal Education, hence, is the institutionalized mode of a basic pedagogic encounter that initially stems from the inherent human propensity to learn and impart learning. The very structure of academic institutions is predicted on such propensity, which essentially involves "bringing up, training and rearing". Following this premise, learning for the purpose of both developing the self and the society is constitutive of Formal Education. This then would be the hallmark of all formal educative models so that anything that falls short of it renders the entire educational system futile and cut-off from the ideals of a society. In concrete terms, when students begin to undergo the process of Formal Education, it is implied that they seek to be "brought up" by qualified educators that follow a judiciously conceived curricula that do not only address certain societal economic needs, but ultimately, teach and preserve universal human values.

It cannot be emphasized enough that the relationship between these two goals is decisive because their intersections are possible areas where *a* potential problem may ensue. The need to balance the economic necessities to address the current demands of a society (e.g. labor force) on one hand; and the preservation of universal human values (e.g. justice, freedom and truth) on the other, is a crucial tension which any academic institution is constantly challenged to be sensitive about.

My position in this article is that education should neither function simply as a social apparatus that "grooms" individuals for their future societal roles nor to merely supply the need of the global labor market. Rather, education must ultimately respond to the call of justice that springs from the proper recognition of the *alterity* of the other, and the responsibility that goes along with it. It does not always follow, therefore, that "education is present by default wherever modern institutionalization and organization of formal schooling occur, especially in today's neoliberal

climate where schooling's aim seems to be producing disciplined and docile economic bodies ready to be cogs in the world economy".[3] While it is true that in the usual state of modern societies, those who are formally "schooled" have the higher probability of getting secure jobs and promising compensation, being "schooled", in this sense, however, does not necessarily mean being "educated". This is to say that Formal Education does not necessarily lead to learning, while learning does not necessarily require Formal Education.

It is in this context that I introduce Matthew Lipman's version of the concept of *Community of Inquiry*, a term coined by Charles Sanders Pierce. Drawing from the ethics of Levinas, I propose that one of the many ways by which the call to recognize *alterity* and the infinite responsibility to the *other* is best concretized and exercised within the context of a community that espouses collaborative inquiry and fosters critical, caring and creative thinking.

This article is divided into three parts. The first part is a brief account of Emmanuel Levinas' salient ethical points. The second part consists of an attempt to describe the totalizing tendency of Formal Education, which I argue, happens on two-level interactions: a.) the basic interaction between all the participants in the education system, and b.) the interaction of the students with the school curricula. The third part consists of a discussion on Lipman's Community of Inquiry which is a model to concretize the response to the call for an ethically driven Formal Education. This will be followed by a conclusion.

The Face of the *Other*

Emmanuel Levinàs' (1906-1995) whole reflection begins in a concrete situation where "violence is the order of the day".[4] All forms and levels of violence, social, interpersonal and individual, have something to do with the encounter of the *other.* This *other* may be a group of people, a society, a neighbor, or even one's own self. The *other* is seen as such due to its inherent nature as an entity separate from that of the subject.

In other words, it is naturally perceived as the *other* precisely because it is not the *I,* that is, it does not form part of what one considers the *self.* Sean Hand comments that Levinàs rejects the Husserlian conception of intentionality which "reduces wisdom to a notion of increasing self-consciousness, in which anything that is non-identical is absorbed by the identical".[5] In a Husserlian encounter, the structural form of inter-subjectivity is symmetrical, which allows for the reduction of the *other* to the subjective understanding of the *I.* It could not be emphasized enough that the experience of the radical *alterity* or the *otherness* of the *other* takes place when "the other is not reduced to, not transformed to an object".[6]

On the other hand, there is violence when *alterity* is disregarded, if not deliberately denied. Violence takes place when what is not the *I* is subsumed to be part of the *I,* that is, when the *non-self* is reduced to the *self.* Likewise, violence occurs when the *other* is subjectively interpreted on the basis of the *self,* and not on the basis of the radical *otherness* of the *other.* It may be well to note that violence, in this context, does not refer only to the cruel physical encounters with certain individuals or groups of people but also to the implicit refusal to recognize basic human differences. This is why the seemingly harmless attitude of *indifference,* for instance, is actually as violent as any act of terrorism. Levinàs explains that "violence is to be found in any action in which one acts as if one were alone to act: as if the rest of the universe were there only to receive the action".[7] In such case, the one which the violent action is intended to is perceived simply as a receiver of such act – almost like a numerical datum. It does not take into account the "person" who receives, because what only matters is its human capacity that is reduced to a mere target of violence. In other words, the *other* is reduced to an object, a faceless *other* stripped off of human autonomy and identity. It is in this context that the *face* finds its significance.

The *face* arrests the attention of the subject and conveys a tacit message of its refusal to be enclosed. The *face* protests, so to speak, to the possibility of its containment in the perceiver's subjective catego-ries. Accordingly, "it cannot be comprehended, that is, encompassed".[8]

Objects, on the other hand, does not present any face. It is for this reason that violence is easily inflicted upon objects, or better still, upon *others* whose faces are left unnoticed, if not totally denied. The occurrence of this objectification simultaneously intersects with the occasion of *totalizing* the *other*. The individuality of the *other* is lost. It is all summed up into an object of thought, and as a consequence, an object of violence.

On the contrary, the presence of the face is precisely "the very possibility of understanding one another".[9] By understanding, it means taking the *other* as completely *other* which involves looking to and through the *other* without using any reductive subjective lens. It is through its *face*, that the *other* invokes an irreducible relation of *responsibility*. According to Deroo, the "pure constituting subject is essentially opened to something outside itself: The subject is not only self-constituted but is also other-constituted".[10] This movement of the *I* exiting itself (which is concretized in the act of responsibility) is naturally evoked in the epiphany of the *face* of the other. It entails a transcendental experience with the *other* which requires the self to remain external while being concerned with the *other*. This could not be emphasized more fully than Levinàs' exhortation that "the *other* becomes my neighbor precisely through the way the face summons me, calls for me, begs for me, and in so doing recalls my responsibility, and calls me into question".[11]

When beholding the face of the other, it is necessary to recognize the asymmetrical relationship that disrupts any attempt of the *I* to subsume. Levinàs' insists that one should always identify the unevenness of the plain between the *self* and the *other*. It is only through the recognition of such asymmetry that the alterity of the other is preserved. And interestingly, it is because of the alterity of the *other* that the *I* is moved to leave itself, so to reach out for the other as a wholly other. This goes to say that, the asymmetrical relation with the other is constitutive of the experience of inter-subjectivity. One would always fail to enter into an inter-subjective realm with another human being until both recognize the inherent differences that make them subjects in the first place. The very condition of the possibility of an authentic human encounter is precisely

the asymmetrical relation of the *I* and the *other*. And where does this transcendental relation naturally begin than through the utilization of language, that is, by means of communication and conversation? "The banal fact of conversation, in one sense, quits the order of violence".[12] This implies that to listen to another person is to allow them to be who they are, which necessarily includes recognizing their uniqueness and exteriority, and not to fall prey into subsuming the *other* under one's subjective paradigm.

In the next section, I will discuss the two levels of interactions in Formal Education where totalizing tendencies may occur. These levels of encounters are potential areas where there is a refusal to recognize the alterity of the other and the denial of the face.

The Totalizing Tendency of Formal Education

Whether informal or formal, education is essentially a form of encounter. Insofar as it constitutes human individuals as participants or "stakeholders" in the whole process, education essentially involves various human encounters. These encounters are non-homologous. They are multi-layered human concurrences that are oftentimes conditioned by the individuals' roles emanating from aggregate societal arrangements. One may be quick to imagine a classroom setup when thinking of education, but such scenario is but a fraction of the entire educational enterprise. This is because education, formal education at that, is an institution. As such, it involves a huge network of human collective that functions to orchestrate a self-sustaining system that aims at certain immediate and long-term goals. The immediate goals may vary from one academic institution to another, but ultimately they share a common *formative* agenda which is operative throughout the entire process. These agenda are normally carried out through classroom instruction, research, evaluations, immersion/exposure, trainings and the like. These processes follow certain curricula that aid learners to gradually develop their potentials to concrete actualities.

Insofar as there are no perfect human pedagogical encounters, it is also impossible to think of a perfect educational institution. The possibility of totalizing, that is, reducing the other as an object, always lurks within the walls of any academic setting. There are two levels of interaction in which a totalizing tendency in a formal education normally takes place. One is on the basic social interaction between all the participants in the education system, while the second level takes place in the interaction of the students with the school curricula.

The first totalizing tendency of formal education, which is rather obvious, is located within the intersections of the roles and functions of every individual in the system – the stakeholders. It goes without saying that each participant in the entire educational process plays a vital role that is essential, in varying degrees, to the proper functioning of the whole system. Just as a pair of nut and bolt has the capacity to spell the overall performance of a machine, so as the individual whose role is deemed the least important in school can actually affect the entire process of the educational structure. These roles carry with them certain social functions that are aligned with the vision and mission of the institution. As an institutional body, a school seeks to respond to a certain societal need. Hence, the said functions are justified – and compensated – on such bases. Human encounters necessarily pass through these social functions. These encounters, therefore, are mediated by socially determined roles.

The problem, however, arises when individuals get "trapped", so to speak, within their social function, conditioned by the social arrangements implicit in the school system. The logical result of these mediated encounters is the reduction of individuals to mere social actors; one among the many cogs that serve to contribute to the overall performance of the entire educational machine. Consequently, students are reduced to mere statistics whose economic value outweighs their personal intrinsic worth. Most often than not, they are trained to become "kids for the market" whose future role is to cater certain economic industries' urgent needs and demands. This basically reflects the "exodus" of a multitude of citizens from the third world countries to fill in the labor

gap among the highly industrialized countries, leaving families behind in pursuit of a greener pasture.

Furthermore, administrators and the members of the faculty are sometimes defined by their abstracted roles, fashioning them as "hollowed" persons of authority. This is particularly true among the academic institutions that still uphold the traditional notion that the authority of teachers is infallible. On this note, Gale observes that the teacher's authority is no less than the "product of the ideology of the dominant class and that the teacher's discourse is an embodiment of the dominant class's ideology and its power".[13] It cannot be emphasized enough that most intellectual violence that happens inside the classroom stem from the imbalance of authority between teachers and students. Traditionally, teachers are deemed as knowledge providers, transmitters of information and masters of certain skills whose authority was generally accepted as something beyond question. Such pedagogical authority, nevertheless, serve to perpetuate a dominant class through its own dominant discourse thereby maintaining a social hierarchy that divides people according to social classes and categorizations. While a totalizing act is obviously present in the imposition of a teacher's authority over the students, the teachers paradoxically become totalized within the pedagogical ideology that they themselves represent. In the same manner, other employees, who hold less authoritative, but equally important positions, are looked upon simply as data and figures – always dispensable. From an ethical standpoint, these people are not supposed to be treated any less than one treats a person with distinction.

By and large, regardless of position in the educational organization, individuals are susceptible to objectification, which necessarily results to a subtle but brutal commodification that violates a person's irreducibility to totality. These totalizing relations and encounters tend to diminish one's personal sense of transcendence. Whenever objectification occurs, there is always a failure to dissociate the *person* from the *function*. In other words, any act of totalizing occurs when one only sees the *distinction* and not the *individual,* the *position* and not the *person*, the *role* and not the *face.*

The second level of interaction in which Formal Education manifests its totalizing tendency is the students' obligation to follow an inherently hegemonic school curriculum. Joldersma observes that the "Western thought generally has involved the desire to reduce reality to a rationally grasped system".[14] What this means is that the Western paradigm – where most school curricula are basically patterned – gravitate towards an absolutist truth-paradigm generally leading to a unified system of thought. Such paradigm is no less than totalizing. Quoting Levinàs, he adds, "the history of Western thought can be interpreted as an attempt at a universal synthesis, a reduction of all experience . . . to a totality wherein consciousness embraces the world, leaving nothing other outside itself, and thus becomes absolute thought".[15]

A school curriculum is, no doubt, an essential roadmap that provides the proper directions towards a particular career destination. It stipulates clear oversight as to which "path" one should follow to arrive at pre-conceived desired outcomes. It arranges the necessary steps that facilitate in the gradual transformative process and also allows for evaluative measures in order to recognize progress, spot hindrances, and determine areas for development. However, insofar as a curriculum specifies what learning areas should be covered, it inevitably leaves out what it deems unnecessary. By necessity, it emphasizes one thing and strikes out another. This is where the totalizing tendency may actually take place. A curriculum reduces knowledge into a whole, a unified concept that can be contained within a course or a discipline as if there is nothing more to it. One must be quick to note that this does not mean that the tendency for totality should be eradicated. It is not a matter of choosing between a totalizing or non-totalizing curriculum. A concept for example, already involves totality. One cannot clearly grasp a thought without the mind "totalizing" that particular thought into a single concept. However, in the realm of human relationships and education, what is imperative is to recognize that there is always an overflowing of totality. This means that one cannot totally objectify a particular knowledge, much less an-*other* person. Something always eludes intellectual grasp. Something always

escapes the boundaries set by human thought and judgment which demand proper attention. Hence, in formal education, a curriculum can only do so much. It should not be taken to mean that it is all there is to know. It cannot be emphasized enough that those who are involved in instruction and research are obligated to impress on the learners that, like a roadmap a curriculum only points to *a* way, but it never assumes to claim that it is *the only* way.

Moreover, this totalizing tendency also occurs in the area of assessment and determination of a learner's "grade". Most often than not, the assessment tools usually utilized for student evaluations are based on certain criteria that are rather totalizing. It is not surprising that within academic institutions, competition among students to vie for the top position of a class or to finish school with honors is tolerated, if not given more emphasis. But we may ask, what is really the purpose of giving students grades and honors? Do they not serve merely as indicators of progress, which also determine the areas for further development? Ironically, what may be at times observed in a class setting is the students' eagerness to pursue grades rather than learning, rank rather than skill. This is why an unhealthy competition may ensue between and among students who are driven by a certain need for approval through the achievement of excellent grades, rather than the achievement of excellent learning.

The view that Formal Education has a totalizing tendency through these levels of interactions is the key to understanding the challenge for its constant reconfiguration and re-evaluation. If one were simply to accept the status quo of academic practices based on traditional erroneous assumptions as normal, then it would not be surprising that the kind of graduates produced will be as totalizing as they themselves had been totalized within the very institutions they came from. This is not to say that formal education is inherently defective and unethical. What this means is that the intersections of power and authority within the structure of formal education should be guarded from human excesses and from the subtle totalizing tendencies that normally stem from the multitude of interactions within the system.

In what follows, I will argue that Matthew Lipman's version of *Community of Inquiry* may be used as a pedagogical model that avoids the totalizing tendencies that are susceptible in a normal formal education setting.

Lipman's Community of Inquiry

Matthew Lipman (1922-2010) re-emphasizes the modern critique against the normal standard of pedagogical practices which are driven by traditional and flawed assumptions. In his *Thinking in Education,* he explains that the dominating assumptions of the standard paradigm include the erroneous idea that education consists in the transmission of knowledge and that the teacher's role is infallible. Also, this paradigm adheres to the assumption that knowledge is unambiguous, unequivocal and un-mysterious; that knowledge is spread into different disciplines which are exhaustive and do not overlap; and worse, that the students learn by absorbing information.

To counter this, he offers what he calls "Reflective Paradigm of Critical Practice" which basically follows a set of pedagogical practices driven by assumptions totally opposite to that of the traditional standard practice.[16] In this paradigm, education is essentially inquiry-based and that the teacher is not infallible. It regards knowledge as always marked by traits of ambiguity, equivocality and mystery; that the different disciplines or bodies of knowledge are non-exhaustive and overlapping; and most importantly, the students' themselves already possess the inherent capabilities for thinking, reflecting and judging.[17]

The Community of Inquiry, a term he borrowed from Charles Sanders Pierce, is a pedagogical model that he used for his main project, i.e. *Philosophy for Children.* For Lipman, education should be administered along the lines of collaborative pedagogy which emphasizes inquiry over explication, redistributes power and authority in the classroom and fosters multidimensional thinking. He describes that "the progress of a Community of Inquiry is guided by the Gestalt quality of the unique,

immediately experienced inquiry situation… and that the educational community of inquiry actively discusses the subject matter under investigation".[18] In other words, in the said community, everyone (including the teacher) is concerned about discovering new forms of knowledge and painstakingly reaching an "aha moment" through collaborative inquiry. It, therefore, does not merely conform to a prepared curriculum, absorb its contents and answer its pre-defined examinations. The role of teachers does not include the traditional conception that they act as pedagogical philanthropists, that is, knowledge providers for impoverished minds. On the contrary, teachers are deemed as facilitators and collaborators. Their role is to "mediate not to dominate".[19] In this way, the students are constantly prodded to examine their process of thinking, encouraged to look at things from different perspectives and enjoined with the rest to follow where the argument leads.

Drawing from pragmatism's notion on education, the Community of Inquiry operates on the assumption that knowledge is produced through a dialogical interchange with the other members in a social group. An individual can only learn so much. But the richness of experiences and knowledge *in* a community, which come from diverse individuals, actually result to a deeper and more impactful learning experience. It is in this context that individual differences – or *alterity* – are given emphasis. A group of individuals do not automatically make up a "community" especially if it is removed from the values of respect and responsibility. Likewise, a group of individuals do not necessarily become a "community" if they only have one voice, and stubbornly adhere to such voice. In other words, what constitute a community, in the first place, are the inherent differences each member brings to the group. These differences manifest in the uniqueness of each other's experiences and points of view. Hence, without the recognition of the *otherness* of each other, chances are, such group would either become anarchic or totalitarian.

Creative, Caring and Critical thinking

The Community of Inquiry fosters multidimensional thinking. Lipman argues that, contrary to common opinion, critical thinking is not all there is to know about *proper* thinking. In fact, there are other modes of thinking that are equally essential in education. We may mistake the notion that thinking critically is the only paramount, and therefore should be given more priority over other mental skills. This, however, should not be the case. For Lipman, "one must be on one's guard not to give the impression…that critical thinking is equal to the whole of thinking".[20] In other words, thinking does not follow a linear process because there are different modes of thinking as there are intentions for thinking. These modes are: Critical, Creative and Caring thinking.

It may be well to note that these three modes of thinking should not be construed as isolated and independently compartmentalized since they are in a continual transaction with each other. Most importantly, these three modalities are best cultivated within the context of a community of inquiry.

Critical Thinking, according to Matthew Lipman is thinking that "facilitates judgment because it relies on criteria, is self-correcting, and is sensitive to context".[21] It cannot be emphasized enough that reliance on a sound logical criteria is vital in arriving at any form of judgment. This prevents students from making judgments based merely on impulse, emotions and groundless claims. Likewise, it essentially consists of a meta-cognitive skill that involves a constant evaluation of the quality of one's own thinking. In other words, critical thinking requires that the thinker subjects its own thinking into constant assessment by determining his/her assumptions and reasons. Also, to think critically involves sensitivity to the context. In other words, it does not operate by merely using general ideas as "templates" that can be applied in all circumstances.

Moving forward, critical thinking intersects with equally decisive values of creative and caring thinking. Lipman lists twelve (12) values that are to be found in C*reative Thinking*. These are: *Originality, Productivity,*

Imagination, Independence, Experimentation, Holism, Expression, Self-transcendence, Surprise, Generativity, Maieuticity, and *Inventiveness.* These values, however, notes Lipman, do not represent the entire spectrum of creative thinking, but rather serve as a summary of generic values under which other specific values may be included.

Among these twelve values, four are worth expounding in relation to their resistance to the totalizing tendency in Formal Education.[22] *Originality* generally refers to the cognitive process of arriving at products of thought without basing from prior patterns. It is carefully treating the circumstantial elements as building blocks in reaching a different point of view that offers new solutions. *Productivity*, on the other hand, is a value-concept that aims at achieving practical and appropriate results. It does not stop at the meta-cognitive process but dives deep into realizing tangible productive consequences. *Independence* is another value-concept that stimulates thinking outside the "normal" ways of thinking. In other words, it tries to access the type of thinking that does not subscribe to what the "crowd" would normally think. Overlapping with the meaning of originality, *independent-thinking* also emphasizes uniqueness and innovation which may, or may not be, consonant with what the majority thinks. Lastly, *experimentation* is another reliable creative thinking-tool that places importance in following a process that is guided by hypotheses. Just like a scientific experiment, this value-concept does not bypass the essential roles of trial and error, testing, validation and repetition.

Moreover, Lipman mentions several manifestations of *Caring Thinking*, namely, *Appreciative thinking*, *Affective thinking*, *Active thinking*, *Normative thinking* and *Empathic thinking*.

Three (3) out of these six are likewise worth expounding due to their inherent values that run counter to the totalizing tendency in Formal Education.

Appreciative thinking is paying close attention to things that are important. Essentially, it involves valuing. It is only when we look closely – hence, appreciatively – at certain things that we come to value their individualities and respect their differences. *Active thinking*, on the

other hand, is an act of *caring for* something or someone, which in a sense, is active. This thinking manifests in some forms of cognition that necessarily lead to action. Further, *normative thinking* is constitutive of caring thinking. Insofar as each act of caring involves an awareness of the ideals of a caring behavior, such thinking is normative, which is essentially cognitive.

By and large, it cannot be sufficiently emphasized that critical, creative and caring thinking are essential in the process of education. Unlike many academic settings, the Community of Inquiry values a balanced and holistic process of thinking in education. It does not only highlight critical thinking, which if used wrongly, might lead to absolutism and dogmatism. Rather, it also seeks to develop a kind of thinking that is not bereft of emotions, valuations and care. It is for this reason that a Community of Inquiry thrives despite the varying and even conflicting views among the members. The value-concept of thinking critically, creatively and caringly provide a "safety net" that prevents the students from resorting to acts of violence, which is one of the many possibilities when there are conflicting points of view.

In particular, critical questions provide, according to Browne and Keeley, a "stimulus and direction for critical thinking; they move us forward toward a continual, ongoing search for better opinions, decisions, or judgments".[23] This is why the Community of Inquiry serves as a counter-witness to the traditional classroom atmosphere where rigid competition and individual performance are valued and emphasized. Instead, it aims at providing an ambiance that promotes cooperation and mutual trust that makes healthy argumentation and discussion possible. In a Community of Inquiry, "students could work together without the fear of failing or disappointing their classmates".[24] In a BBC documentary, Lipman stresses that a community of inquiry

> …is not a community of solidarity where everybody feels the same and has the same ideas and sensations and so forth, but [a kind of community] where there's a division of

feeling; there's a complementarity of feeling and of thinking. So they rely on each other, depend on each other. It's very much like a team where there are certain people who are good at passing and others good at running. And they depend on each other; they know they can count on each other. And that's the community we are trying to create.[25]

The values in a Community of Inquiry are not normally fostered in the traditional standard of education. What is more emphasized in the standard paradigm is the students' gradual ascent from their own levels to that of the teacher through passive absorption of knowledge and skills. Consequently, this leads towards competition, jealousy and even antagonism towards the so-called "academic achievements" of some students. Hence, the classroom becomes an arena, a place where a student is compelled to prove to others his/her capabilities. Just like the standard paradigm of educational practice, the community of inquiry aims to enhance the students' cognitive skills, such as building an argument, evaluating criteria and responding to certain propositions. However, *unlike* the standard paradigm, the community of inquiry goes a little further as to provide an avenue for the students to develop their creative and caring modalities of thinking. In other words, inasmuch as the students are taught to be rational and critical, they are also, and most importantly, taught (in the process of collaborative inquiry) how to feel, to care for the other, to take responsibility for the other and to stay creative. In the process, the students learn the manner of "listening to objections carefully, taking them seriously and disagreeing with them without fighting or feeling hurt by the disagreement".[26] What is interesting is that these values are not taught didactically by a teacher. The students do not learn their meaning in the same way as they learn an *object* or a *concept.* Rather, they learn these through experience as they go through the process of collaborative inquiry. In other words, in a Community of Inquiry, learning actually takes place without the teacher's explication.

Conclusion

I have argued that Formal Education – being an institution – has the tendency to reduce its stakeholders into mere social actors that simply function according to their assumed status. However, Levinàs reminds each individual's infinite responsibility to the *other* which begins by recognizing the radical alterity and irreducibility of the *other* to some object devoid of identity and worth. Pedagogical encounters remain superficial when it does not penetrate into the depths of one's subjectivity. In other words, learning is not guaranteed when a distance is always maintained between the participants in the entire process. A teacher, for instance, does not do well in collaborating with the students' intellectual journey if s/he treats them merely as a "class", that is, a group of students without voices of their own. This generalizing and totalizing tendency in formal education bypasses the most important element in the learning process: the individual *face.* Matthew Lipman's Community of Inquiry unsettles such traditional mode of interaction within the Formal Education setting where individuals (e.g. students and teachers) become susceptible to objectification. In a Community of Inquiry, the process of learning begins from the basic assumption that each member is unique, important and valued. It avoids the usual pedagogical mistake of treating all students under a uniform academic standard. In turning ordinary classrooms to Communities of Inquiry, all become participants in the collaborative process of learning, including the teacher. It must be emphasized that the teacher's role is not to feign ignorance or impose mastery. Rather, the teacher sees to it that the values of dialogue and the nurturance of critical, creative and caring thinking are fostered and maintained. In such context, the totalizing tendency in the level of interaction between the teacher and the students is diminished precisely because, in the process of dialogue, each one allows everybody to be who they are. The students are not fearfully subjected under the totalizing gaze of the teacher.

In the traditional formal education setup, the curricula take precedence in determining the trajectory of the students' education in

a given period of time. In other words, it is the school that primarily determines what they should learn and how they are supposed to learn. On the contrary, in a Community of Inquiry, the curricula simply focus on developing the students' capability to inquire and to think well. This does not mean to say that a curriculum is useless and therefore should be dispensed with. Rather, a curriculum must not go beyond what it is made for, that is, to guide and to serve as a roadmap towards higher forms of learning. This means to say that it does not serve as the sole determinant of what a student ought to know, much less dictate the manner by which to know. The basic assumption here is that, the students already possess the capabilities for learning. Hence, if the students are exposed on a dialogical environment where thinking critically, creatively and caringly is given primacy over contents, they will actually learn the mental tools that are necessary to use their reasons appropriately. This is why it is important that any learning process should run along the lines of collaborative inquiry. By this, the students are constantly prodded to inquire, discover and learn by themselves.

END NOTES

[1] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education, an Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (India: Aakar Books, 2004), 3.

[2] Ibid., 7.

[3] Clarence Joldersma, *A Levinasian Ethics for Education's Commonplaces: Between Calling and Inspiration (*New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 3.

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[5] Sean Hand, *Emmanuel Levinas.* (New York: Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2008), 75.

[6] Calasanz, 1998, 167.

[7] Emmanuel Levinàs, *Difficult Freedom: Essays On Judaism,* trans. Sean Hand. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 6.

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[9] Levinas, 1990, 9.

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