PHILOSOPHY OF THE MANY:
HIGH SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY AND A POLITICS OF DIFFERENCE

by

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Abstract

As we start a new millennium, the conviction that exclusionary practices need to be fought at all levels of society is becoming gradually more accepted. Nevertheless, as I show in this thesis, many if not most researchers on High School Philosophy (HSP) operate from what Iris Marion Young (1990) calls a logic of identity, which continues to be exclusionary even when it attempts to reach “all.” My objective in this thesis, therefore, is to map out the HSP literature in terms of Young’s “Politics of Difference,” and, by doing that, to suggest ways in which it could be more inclusive.

This adaptation of Young’s Politics of Difference to HSP is presented in this thesis in six chapters. In chapter 1, I summarize the main aspects of Young’s argument. In chapter 2, I give an overview of the current literature on HSP, showing that it is scarce and scattered. This thesis’s first contribution, therefore, is as a representative, though not exhaustive, catalogue of the HSP literature. In chapter 3, I present a deeper analysis of the HSP literature, dividing it into two main strands, “the selective” and the “universal” approaches to HSP. I also argue in this chapter that both these approaches are problematic, because they exclude many, privileges some over others and alienate all. In chapter 4, I present a brief analysis of the epistemology informing both the selective and the universal approaches to HSP. In this chapter, I focus on the so-called “Myth of Neutrality,” which is another manifestation of the logic of identity. Using as illustration
the works of two authors, Robert Simon and Harvey Siegel, I show in this chapter how the myth of neutrality manifests the positivism and reductionism typical of the logic of identity. Finally, in chapter 5 I present my positive proposal for HSP, which I called “Philosophy of Many” (PoM), as a more inclusive alternative to both the selective and the universal approaches to HSP. The final chapter reviews the main conclusions of this study and suggests direction for further research.
Acknowledgements

When I first started a PhD in 2001, I thought I was invincible. I knew I was smart, and I could work hard if so inclined. My needs were not too extravagant, and I was proud to be Ms. Independence. Simon and Garfunkel’s "I Am a Rock" might as well have been written about me.

If I learned anything from my doctoral journey, it was that no man is an island, and the same is true of women. It was a great surprise to learn that, to complete a PhD hard work and natural talent are not enough. One needs infrastructure. One needs a solid and intricate web of emotional, academic, spiritual and financial support. This is what I found out writing this thesis and in a way, this is what this thesis is about. The PhD asked of me more than I ever thought it would (or that anything could). But it also gave me more than I thought anything could, recognition of academic accomplishment being the least important of all. Although I am fully responsible for this thesis, I must acknowledge that it embodies accomplishments that are not just my own. It reflects the wisdom, struggles and disappointments of people who loved me before I was born, of people who saw me grow up and of people who only knew me as a foreigner, and supported me regardless, asking nothing in return.

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walking with me at all times and carrying me when necessary and to the Holy Spirit, the Mighty Wind, for inspiring me and stirring me in unimaginable directions, sometimes like a breeze, sometimes more like a tornado.

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Preface

Western Philosophy traces itself back to Socrates, with his insistent exhortation to follow the Delphic command of “Know Thyself” and his maxim that “an unexamined life is not worth living.” Yet, Delphic command and Socratic injunction notwithstanding, mainstream academic practice to this day often strives after a non-personal style of reflection, in pursuit of an elusive objective and universal perspective.

Although Michel Foucault, Paulo Freire, standpoint theorists and others have argued the importance of questioning how reality and knowledge come to be constructed and reified, “objective reality” is still today often seen as fixed and static, as is the knowledge of it. Within this tradition, one may be led to believe that alienating oneself from one’s personal physical reality is the (only or best) way to reason more clearly, in an effort towards that unreachable impersonal, objective, neutral perspective. However, by consistently praising the objective and deriding the subjective, this tradition effectively works to annihilate the subject and to objectify people.

This is all to say that that my understanding of philosophy (and the academic work that is derived from it, such as this thesis) influences and is influenced by who I am, which in turn influences and is influenced by where I come from, and so on. As Merleau-Ponty says:

All my knowledge of the world, even my scientific knowledge, is gained from my own particular point of view, or from some experience of the world without which the symbols of science would be meaningless.
(Merleau-Ponty, 1969/1989, viii)

Much of this thesis has arisen from arguments with family members, friends, colleagues, professors, students, current and past. The discussions often gravitated around arguments such as implicit conceptions of what philosophy and the job of the philosopher
are supposed to be like. The reason such debates often become heated is that these conceptions are deeply intertwined with core personal beliefs – despite the equally heated protests (naïve or hypocritical) that these conceptions are objective and completely impersonal.

Despite the many things Socrates or Descartes got “wrong,” of the things these two philosophers got “less wrong,” I particularly like the emphasis they place on philosophy as means to self-knowledge, and self-knowledge as means towards further knowledge. Although there is much more to it than I will cover here, the Cartesian “what am I?” is as good a foundation for an investigation as good foundations go.

The answer to this question involves many relational references: to where I come from, to where I currently happen to live, to where I am planning to go. I am Latin American; more specifically, Brazilian; from Brasilia, the new capital of Brazil, from a family composed mostly of civil servants, all come to the city from the countryside around one of the driest and poorest regions of the country.

Not only that, I am a first generation city child from a rural Brazilian family, the only sibling of my younger brother, eldest granddaughter of my mother’s parents, currently completing a doctorate in philosophy of education as an international student in the so-called developed world (in Canada; in Toronto to be more specific; in the department of Theory and Policy Studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, to be even more specific).

Such details might at first seem out of place in an academic work. Nevertheless, I mention them here because each of them informs my thesis in a fundamental way. My arguments in this thesis are often personal, which is not to say they are merely
“subjective”. The “objective truth” of the matter is that the driving force in this thesis is my personal experience: as philosopher, teacher, student, of Latin American Catholic emergent middle-class origin, with feminist and Marxist tendencies.

When all these strong and often contradictory dimensions converge in one person, one finds that some of the commitments usually entailed by each are cancelled out by the tensions between them, while other commitments are strengthened by these same tensions. In my case, these tensions resulted in a concern for how social justice, education and philosophy intersect. It is precisely this concern that prompts this thesis.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

We, the participants in the International Study Days on “Philosophy and Democracy in the World” organized by UNESCO in Paris on 15 and 16 February 1995, … declare that:
- All individuals everywhere should be entitled to engage in the free pursuit of philosophy in all its forms and all places where it may be practised;
- Philosophy teaching should be maintained or expanded where it exists, introduced where it does not yet exist, and designated explicitly as “philosophy” (UNESCO, 2005, Annex II)

Philosophy has been a very secluded profession, very isolated and aristocratic. … But we don’t really know what the spreading of philosophy will entail. (Lipman, as cited in Gregory, 2000, p. 58)

The philosopher is always socially situated, and if the society is divided by oppressions, she either reinforces or struggles against them. (Young, 1990, p. 5)

In the last few decades, the literature on social inclusion and diversity has grown significantly in a variety of fields. However, despite the fact that a substantive body of literature on these issues has emerged in both the individual fields of philosophy and education in general, and in the interdisciplinary field of philosophy of education in particular,¹ when it comes to teaching of philosophy in high schools, there is little written on these important issues of social inclusion and diversity.

On the one hand, such a gap might not seem surprising: as I show in chapter 2, there is little written on high school philosophy at all, and most of what does exist deals with the existential issue of whether such enterprise would be at all feasible or desirable.

¹ “In recent philosophy of education, as in philosophy more generally, it is difficult to find a theme more widely discussed, or universally endorsed, than that of inclusion. Postmodernists, feminists, critical theorists, discourse ethicists, old-fashioned liberals and many others routinely extol the virtues of inclusionary discourses and theories – discourses which seek out, make room for, and take seriously, and theories which adequately reflect, the voices, views and interests of those who are and have traditionally been excluded from discussion and/or consideration.” (Siegel, 1995, p.1)

“Philosophy of education is itself a subject about which its practitioners discourse and construct theories; consequently, we can and should ask parallel questions about inclusion, and the virtues of particularity, in our philosophical discourse and theories concerning education.” (Siegel, 1995, p. 3)
Most of the literature on high school philosophy was written in the 1960s and early 1970s: prior, therefore, to the growth of anti-oppression studies such as women and gender studies, minority studies, etc.

On the other hand, however, this gap is extremely serious and no longer excusable. Almost nothing has been written on high school philosophy after these various fields of anti-oppression studies found a niche in academia. This is particularly disconcerting because, as I show in chapter 2, the presence of philosophy in the secondary school curriculum is not simply a metaphysical possibility or an avant-garde experiment, but a reality in many places around the world. As the opening quotes to this chapter illustrate, even UNESCO has expressed increasing attention to the teaching of philosophy in recent years. The fact that the majority of the people involved in implementing philosophy in high schools (such as policy makers, administrators, teachers and teacher trainers) frequently rely on scholarly literature for guidance (especially because philosophy is a relatively new discipline in many places) makes this lack particularly worrisome.

This thesis is intended to help bridge this gap. Using the work of Iris Marion Young as theoretical guide, especially her *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (1990), this dissertation defends the following thesis: that without deliberate attention to what Young calls “social difference,” High School Philosophy (HSP) effectively works to perpetuate oppression in society – whether philosophy educators are aware of it or not. Conversely, when combined with proper attention to social difference, HSP can be a powerful instrument against oppression. Hence the importance of the Young quote at the opening of this thesis: “The philosopher is always socially situated, and if the society is
divided by oppressions, she either reinforces or struggles against them.” (Young, 1990, p. 5)

**From Philosopher Young to Young Philosophers**

In her 1990 book, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Iris Marion Young attempts to combine the arguments of different social movements in the previous few decades (such as democratic socialist, environmentalist, Black, Chicano, Puerto Rican, and American Indian movements; movements against U.S. military intervention in the Third World; gay and lesbian liberation; movements of the disabled, the old, tenants, and the poor; and the feminist movement). Her goal in this work is to analyze the impact of these groups on political philosophy, especially in the way political philosophy defines justice. All these movements, Young points out, claim that “American society contains deep institutional injustices” – injustices which contemporary philosophical theories of justice are not equipped to address (p. 3).

Young starts this book by listing some questions raised by the different political movements that prompted it (1990, p. 3). As she explores these questions, she draws attention to two main aspects of contemporary political theory: (a) “the positivism of political theory in assuming as given structures that ought to be brought under normative evaluation” and (b) “the tendency to reduce political subjects to a unity and to value commonness or sameness over specificity” (p. 3).

Both the positivism and the reductionism that Young detects in contemporary political theory are expressions of what Young, following Adorno, calls “logic of identity”:

The logic of identity expresses one construction of the meaning and operations of reason: an urge to think things together, to reduce them to
unity. To give a rational account is to find the universal, the one principle, the law, covering the phenomena to be accounted for. Reason seeks essence, a single formula that classifies concrete particulars as inside or outside a category. Something common to all things that belong in the category. The logic of identity tends to conceptualize entities in terms of substance rather than process or relation; substance is the self-same entity that underlies change, that can be identified, counted, measured. (1990, p. 98)

A logic of identity conceptualizes everything in terms of fixed substances, valuing sameness and homogeneity. A logic of difference, on the other hand, focuses primarily on relations, not on substances, valuing difference and heterogeneity. While the logic of identity is more rigid and essentializing, a logic of difference is more fluid and dynamic.

This thesis explores some of the implications of Young’s argument for the teaching of philosophy at the secondary level. But what does HSP have to do with political philosophy, with justice, or with a politics of difference? First, Young claims that “justice should refer not only to distribution, but also to the institutional conditions necessary for the development and exercise of individual capacities and collective communication and cooperation” (1990, p. 38). Arguably, the development and exercise of individual capacities and collective communication and cooperation is an intrinsic part of philosophy education.

Second, in the discourse about HSP too, we find the same positivism and reductionism that Young detects in contemporary political theory (1990, p. 3). We see the positivism of “assuming as given structures that ought to be brought under normative evaluation,” when philosophy is seen as static and not a socially situated activity which influences and is influenced by the social norms current to particular contexts (p. 5). We also find the reductionist “tendency to reduce political subjects” – in this case philosophy
students, teachers, aims and methods – “to a unity and to value commonness or sameness over specificity” (p. 5).

Young’s critique of the logic of identity and her advocacy of a more relational and fluid type of logic informs four main ideas that are central to this thesis: (a) the difference between distributive patterns and dynamic relations; (b) the concept of a social group; (c) the concept of oppression; and (d) the difference between autonomy and empowerment. All of these four items are intricately related to one another. In the next sections, I briefly explain each of them, and how they relate to the analysis of HSP that I present in this thesis.

**Key Ideas**

The logic of distribution treats nonmaterial goods as identifiable things or bundles distributed in a static pattern among identifiable, separate individuals. The reification, individualism, and pattern orientation assumed in the distributive paradigm, moreover, often obscures issues of domination and oppression, which require a more process-oriented and relational conceptualization. (Young, 1990, p. 8)

Young argues that, because it operates under a paradigm of distribution, liberal philosophy cannot account for the claims oppressed groups make. These claims have to do more with relations such as domination and oppression than with fixed patterns of distribution. In other words, while distribution is part of what is involved in injustice, it is not all there is to it. Her aim in *Justice and the Politics of Difference* is thus to address this disparity. Her main argument is therefore that “instead of focusing on distribution, a conception of justice should begin with the concepts of domination and oppression” (1990, p. 3). Part of what is involved in this shift is thus a distinction “between an approach to social justice that gives primacy to having and one that gives primacy to
doing” (p. 8). Another part of what is involved in this shift is a rejection of an individualist logic of identity, which ignores relations between individuals.

Liberal philosophers and political theorists see the individual as the main unit in their theories, thus assuming a social atomism.

This individualist ontology usually goes together with a normative conception of the self as independent. The authentic self is autonomous, unified, free, and self-made, standing apart from history and affiliations, choosing its life plan entirely for itself. One of the main contributions of poststructuralist philosophy has been to expose as illusory this metaphysic of a unified self-making subjectivity, which posits the subject as an autonomous origin or an underlying substance to which attributes of gender, nationality, family role, intellectual disposition, and so on might attach. (Young, 1990, p. 45)

According to Young’s definition, however, social groups are ontologically prior to individuals, and not the other way around. Belonging to this or that racial group, to this or that class helps to shape the individual more than particular individuals’ attitudes and attributes shape this or that racial group or social class. As Kwame Anthony Appiah puts it: “We make up selves from a tool kit of options made available by our culture and society. We do make choices, but we do not determine the options among which we choose” (Appiah, 1994, as cited in Young, 2002, pp. 101-102). The term “attribute” is then, according to Young’s conception, not accurate. First, because belonging to this or that social group (that is, being white or non-white, female or male, homosexual or heterosexual, rich or poor, young or old, etc) are not just add-on features to an underlying substance, as the logic of identity would have it, but are instead core features of a person’s make-up. Second, attributes are inaccurate ways to describe what Young calls “group membership” or “group differentiation,” because they are not simply features of particular individuals, but rather features which mark individuals as belonging to specific social groups.
Social groups are thus different from both aggregates and associations. Unlike aggregates, on the one hand, groups are defined not merely because of a random shared attribute, like eye color or hair length, but by a sense of collective identity. On the other hand, unlike associations, there is a “thrownness” about social groups: one chooses to enter an association, but one does not choose to belong or not to a social group. In other words, one is of a particular gender, class, race, age, physical and mental ability and all these so-called “attributes” will deeply influence one’s sense of identity, without the individual’s having much choice about it. As Young says: “Individual subjects make their own identities, but not under conditions they choose” (Young, 2002, p. 99).

One may think that pointing out group difference only accentuates division in society. Jean Bethke Elshtain’s *Democracy on Trial* is a good example of this position:

To the extent that citizens begin to retribalize into ethnic or other “fixed identity” groups, democracy falters. Any possibility for dialogue, for democratic communication and commonality, vanishes as so much froth on the polluted sea of phony equality. Difference becomes more and more exclusive. If you are black and I am white, by definition I do not and cannot in principle “get it”. There is no way that we can negotiate the space between our given differences. We are just stuck with them in what political theorists used to call “ascriptive characteristics” – things we cannot change about ourselves. Mired in the cement of our own identities, we need never deal with one another. Not really. One of us will win and one of us will lose the cultural war or the political struggle. That’s what it’s all about: power of the most reductive, impositional sort. (Jean Bethke Elshtain, as cited in Young, 2002, p. 84)

This argument relies on a logic of identity, in that this logic equates difference with total opposition, instead of seeing difference as “relations of similarity and dissimilarity that can be reduced to neither co-extensive identity nor overlapping

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2 Arguably, sexual orientation is another core attribute about which one does not have a choice, although this point is much more controversial than the other ones.
“The oppressive meaning of group difference defines it as absolute otherness, mutual exclusion, categorical opposition. This essentialist meaning of difference submits to the logic of identity. One group occupies the position of a norm, against which all others are measured. The attempt to reduce all persons to the unity of a common measure constructs as deviant those whose attributes differ from the group-specific attributes implicitly presumed in the norm. The drive to unify the particularity and multiplicity of practices, cultural symbols, and ways of relating in clear and distinct categories turns difference into exclusion.” (Young, 1990, p. 169)

“Many people rightly resist the suggestion, moreover, that who they are as individuals is determined in specific ways by social group membership. Such a notion of personal identity as constituted by an alleged group identity fails to give sufficient force to personal freedom and individuality. From these failings it does not follow that groups are fictions or have no significant relation to individual possibilities. The relation of individual to groups, however, is not one of identity. Social groups do indeed position individuals, but a person’s identity is her own, formed in active relation to social positions, among other things, rather than constituted by them. (…) None of this, however, determines individual identities. Subjects are not only conditioned by their positions in structured social relation; subjects are also agents. To be an agent means that you can take the constraints and possibilities that condition your life and make something of them in your own way. Some women, for example, affirm norms of femininity and internalize them; others resist evaluations of their actions and dispositions in such terms. Some people whose class status makes their childhood relatively difficult develop an attitude of working-class militancy against bosses, while others become determined to enter the upper class.” (Young, 2002, pp. 99-102).

“If group identity constitutes individual identity and if individuals can identify with one another by means of group identity, then how do we deal theoretically and practically with the fact of multiple group positioning? Is my individual identity somehow an aggregate of my gender identity, race identity, class identity, like a string of beads, to use Elizabeth Spelman’s metaphor? In addition, this ontological problem has a political dimension: as Spelman, Lugones, and others argue, the attempt to define a common group identity tends to normalize the experience and perspective of some of the group members while marginalizing or silencing that of others.” (Young, 2002, pp. 88-89, my emphasis)
settings, or institutionalized social processes which inhibit people’s ability to play and communicate with others or to express their feelings and perspective on social life in contexts where others can listen. (Young, 1990, p. 38)

According to Young, oppression is a systematic or structural condition of groups.

To say that oppression is systematic, or structural, means that it does not result from the intentions of one person or a group of people, but rather:

it is embedded in unquestioned norms, habits and symbols, and the assumptions underlying institutional rules and the collective consequences of following those rules. It names, as Marilyn Frye puts it, “an enclosing structure of forces and barriers which tends to the immobilization and reduction of a group or category of people” (Frye, 1983a, p. 11). In this extended structural sense oppression refers to the vast and deep injustices some groups suffer as a consequence of often unconscious assumptions and reactions of well-meaning people in ordinary interactions, media and cultural stereotypes, and structural features of bureaucratic hierarchies and market mechanisms – in short, the normal processes of everyday life. (Young 1990, p. 41)

Young sees oppression as a condition of groups in that it is not directed towards individuals on the basis of his or her individuality, but rather as a function of their belonging to this or that oppressed group: that is, to the extent that one is a woman, or a homosexual, or old, disabled, poor, etc. The fact that oppression is structural means that it is often unconscious and unintentional, but not less real because of that. Thus, while reinforcement of oppression is often unintentional, the process of fighting it requires awareness: it is a deliberate decision to stop accepting oppressive norms and customs that are given as immutable. It is a call for thinking about ways in which such norms and customs could be changed so as to be more just.6

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6 “The injunction to ‘be just’ in such matters amounts to no more and no less than a call to bring these phenomena of practical consciousness and unconsciousness under discussion, that is, to politicize them. The requirements of justice, then, concern less the making of cultural rules than providing institutional means for fostering politicized cultural discussion, and making forums and media available for alternative cultural experiment and play.” (Young, 1990, p. 152).
Instrumental to this end is Young’s distinction between autonomy and empowerment. In the beginning of *Justice and Politics of Difference*, Young defines injustice as domination and oppression, both of which are negative terms: domination is the denial of self-determination and oppression is the denial of self-development. In the final chapter of that same book she presents the concept of empowerment as a way to foster both self-determination and self-development, without falling into “self-centeredness.” Unlike autonomy, empowerment is fundamentally relational. It thus counteracts the alienation brought about by the logic of identity and distribution.

By fostering multilateral relations, Young’s concept of empowerment moves away from individualistic or atomistic notions of determination and development without falling into a homogeneous “collective will.” Instead of a community of shared ends, empowerment implies the being together of unassimilated strangers who share space, activities and resources (Young, 1990, ch. 8). This is why Young’s notions of social groups and social difference, of oppression as a characteristic of groups and her distinction between autonomy and empowerment are so important for her Politics of Difference. They allow Young to get away from a liberal, individualistic, atomistic concept of justice, to one that is relational and that does justice to the heterogeneity of groups.
What Does This Have To Do With High School Philosophy?

To the extent that HSP aims at helping adolescents develop their ability “to communicate with others or to express their feelings and perspective on social life in contexts where others can listen” (Young, 1990, p. 38), its mandate should arguably include fighting oppression in its various forms. Young’s framework is helpful for detecting and treating serious lacks in HSP as well as understanding how philosophy can affect society, either positively or negatively.

To find ways to develop these abilities is a moral obligation that requires creativity. HSP can help with this, in that it is a conducive environment for questioning the justice of norms, behaviors and assumptions: it can be an “institutional means for fostering politicized cultural discussion.”(Young, 1990, p. 152). HSP can be a means for empowering marginalized groups, but also for reinforcing dominant norms. In other words, to the extent that philosophy educators neglect or deny issues of difference, HSP can also work to reinforce oppression. In Young’s words: “To the extent that normative philosophy ignores these aspects of oppression enacted in practical consciousness and the unconscious (…), it contributes not only little to ending oppression, but also something to the silencing of the oppressed” (Young, 1990, p. 149).

Following Young, I believe that social justice requires a paradigm of difference. Justifications for HSP that do not take into consideration issues of social inequality must be questioned and challenged for many reasons. First, because philosophy has historically been reserved to a privileged few. Second, because the ideals behind philosophy education are culturally and politically marked. Third, students already bring to the classroom patterns of structural inequality that tip the probability of success in favour of
some and to the disadvantage of others. Fourth, philosophy educators must be made aware of this fact if they are to reverse it, and not continue to reinforce it. But, fifth, philosophy educators must have proper prior and on-going training in order for item four to happen. Finally, silence on this topic of education and social inequality on the part of philosophers, philosophy educators and policy makers sends the message that these issues are not philosophically relevant. But given their prevalence, to say that issues of oppression and social inequality are philosophically irrelevant is in effect to say that philosophy is confined to the highly selective environments of privilege. A paradigm of difference, on the other hand, can make the case for HSP much stronger.

To see HSP students as a “unified public” means that those who are privileged have their experience elevated and treated as universal, while the experience of oppressed groups is silenced or denigrated (Young, 1990, p. 184):

[P]olicies that are universally formulated and thus blind to differences of race, culture, gender, age, or disability often perpetuate rather than undermine oppression. Universally formulated standards or norms, for example, according to which all competitors for social positions are evaluated, often presume as the norm capacities, values, and cognitive and behavioral styles typical of dominant groups, thus disadvantaging others. Racist, sexist, homophobic, ageist, and ableist aversions and stereotypes, moreover, continue to devalue or render invisible some people, often disadvantaging them in economic and political interactions. Policies that take notice of the specific situation of oppressed groups can offset these disadvantages. (Young, 1990, p. 173)

We see this in HSP in the constant praise for the rational values of European philosophy, for example. But this problem goes beyond the mere issue of cultural difference. It is surprising and worrisome that issues of structural difference – by which I mean gender, race, class, sexual orientation, physical and mental ability – continue to be absent from the scholarly literature on HSP. This is symptomatic of bigger problems – that the myth of educational neutrality, which I discuss in detail in chapter 4, is still very
dominant in philosophy education; that philosophers are still tangled in abstract universals and not paying sufficient attention to specificity; that they think about philosophers in abstract, but not about teenage philosophers in particular time and places.

**Philosophy as Situated**

Critical theory is a mode of discourse which projects normative possibilities unrealized but felt in a particular given social reality… Norms and ideals arise from the yearning that is an expression of freedom: it does not have to be this way, it could be otherwise. (Young, 1990, p. 6)

The point of a critical positive normative theory is to indicate ways in which current structures can and should be changed. It opposes the kind of positivism which assumes that current structures are fixed. Such theory is critical in that it finds fault with the structures as they exist. It is positive, in that it proposes ways in which such structures could be changed. Furthermore, inasmuch as it is normative, the type of critical theory to which this thesis subscribes also opposes relativism, or any type of “anything goes” attitude. In other words, following Young, by criticizing traditional approaches to political philosophy as oppressive, I thereby commit myself to the view that oppression is objectively wrong and must not be tolerated. Such a stance could hardly be labeled as relativism.

An account of philosophy as inserted in the social reality means that attention to pedagogical and methodological issues is important. The central question in this thesis, therefore, is not whether philosophy can or should be taught in high schools, but rather how, both in the sense of how philosophy, its students and teachers are conceptualized, but also how the process of teaching and learning philosophy itself is conceptualized and implemented. “How is philosophy defined?” “How is it taught?” “How is that better?” “How is that worse?” “How does that follow?” To think of how forces us to think not
only of why include philosophy in high schools, but also of the assumptions behind our
justifications. While I do not believe that HSP is an unqualified good, I do believe that,
with the proper qualifications, it can be a good instrument in helping differently located
adolescents develop their potential for learning and expression. Thus it can be a good
instrument in the fight against oppression as Young defines it.

As I mentioned before, philosophers, educators and political theorists often
subscribe to the logic of identity. The logic of identity has two main manifestations: the
positivism of seeing processes as fixed and abstract entities and the reductionism of
reducing things to unity and sameness. Seeing the individual as main unit in their
theories, the logic of identity thus implies a social atomism. To the extent that the logic of
identity is present in HSP, all these features are also present there. While the atomistic
features of the logic of identity – and of philosophy qua manifestation of the logic of
identity – are alienating for everyone, they are particularly so for the adolescent, because
of where they are in their psychological development. In Suissa’s words:

[I]n the context of the secondary school curriculum, focusing on the self
and individual experience seems intuitively worrying when one stops to
consider that most adolescents are already remarkably self-absorbed. If
education is, apart from anything else, intended to help children become
flourishing members of society, surely it should at least help them, at this
age, not only to affirm their self-worth, but also to see themselves in
relation to the wider world they inhabit, and in which they will, it is
hoped, eventually take on active, participatory and constructive roles.
(Suissa, 2008, pp. 136-137)\(^7\)

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\(^7\) “I do not think that Dewey would be alone in rejecting the statement that self-understanding is ‘what
education is really about.’ Surely one would not call someone ‘educated’ who had a very sophisticated
degree of self-understanding, but not much knowledge or understanding of major aspects of human culture
and society. Indeed, it is questionable whether one can make sense of the notion of ‘self-understanding’
independently of an account of the social and cultural context in which it takes place. The promotion of
self-understanding as an independently valuable educational aim seems to me to be conceptually
problematic.” (Suissa, 2008, p. 136)
While I do believe that the adolescents’ stage of development makes them particularly good candidates for the study of philosophy (despite widespread doubts, as shown in the next chapter), I also believe that it makes them particularly vulnerable, and deserving of differentiated attention – and attention that is by and large missing in the scholarly literature.

What I propose in this thesis, therefore, is an approach to HSP that moves away from the logic of identity. In other words, what I propose in this thesis is an adaptation of Young’s Politics of Difference to HSP. This approach, which I present in detail 5, moves away from both the positivism of seeing entities such as philosophy, education and knowledge as abstract and immutable and from the reductionism of seeing students, teachers, and teaching situations as basically the same. But before I can present this proposal, I must first present in detail the current situation of HSP philosophy around the world, its main tendencies and the philosophical assumptions that inform these tendencies. In the next section, therefore, I offer a summary of this thesis argument chapter by chapter.
**Thesis Argument and Chapter Outline**

The scholarly literature on High School Philosophy gravitates around the questions of feasibility and desirability, which barely touch the surface on the issue of difference. In chapter 2, I address the question of feasibility, arguing that it is now outdated, given that philosophy is currently taught in high schools around the world. In that chapter I also show that there lacks in the HSP literature the concept of group differentiation which, as I argue in this thesis, is the determining factor of whether HSP works to fight oppression or to reinforce it. There is not much attention to social difference, which is problematic. This lack reveals a certain group blindness, a tendency of seeing all pre-college students as the same. This homogenizing tendency follows the so-called logic of identity: “an urge to think things together, to reduce them to unity” (Young, 1990, p. 98).

Chapter 3 addresses the question of desirability of HSP. In particular, I analyze the two ways in which the question of “how is HSP desirable” has been addressed in the literature, which I call the “selective” and the “universal” approaches to HSP. In this chapter, I argue that the group blindness identified in chapter 2 and manifested by the selective as well as by the universal approach to HSP reinforces oppression in three main ways: (a) it excludes many youth at the same time that it renders them invisible (e.g., those with learning disabilities); (b) it privileges some students over others (e.g., upper class over working class, White over non-White, boys over girls, etc); and (c) it reinforces oppressive social norms (such as mind-body dichotomy and social atomism).

Chapter 4, entitled “The Myth of Neutrality and the Logic of Identity,” explores a core theoretical assumption involved in both the selective and the universal approaches to
HSP, namely, the so-called “Myth of Neutrality.” This myth, which is a legacy from Plato and his “world of ideas,” holds that knowledge is an objective and abstract entity, and that therefore activities that have to do with knowledge, such as education, epistemology and philosophy, are – or at least should be – neutral with respect to how they view and treat different knowers. Using as illustration the works of two authors, Robert S. Simon and Harvey Siegel, I argue that the myth of neutrality, which is still very much alive and well, is another manifestation of the logic of identity. As such, it falls prey to both reductionism and positivism, and is oppressive in that it excludes many, privileges some over others, and reinforces alienation.

In chapter 5, I present my alternative to both the selective and the universal approaches to HSP and also to the Myth of Neutrality. My proposal, which I named “Philosophy of the Many” (“PoM”) is an adaptation of Young’s Politics of Difference to the teaching of philosophy. As such, PoM hinges around three concepts in Young’s framework: her notion of social group difference, her definition of oppression and her distinction between autonomy and empowerment. Young’s concept of social group difference counters the reductionism of seeing all individuals as the same, one of the manifestations of the logic of identity. Her definition of social group as fluid and cross-cutting helps prevent essentialism and assimilation. Young’s definition of oppression is central in that it reminds us that the point of valuing social difference is not to espouse a view where all are equally different and everything goes. Rather, it is to identify and address ways in which some are privileged over others, where some have conditions to express themselves in a context where others will listen while others do not. Finally, the
distinction between empowerment and autonomy helps to provide a theoretical apparatus for the PoM practitioner to navigate across the different types of difference.

The final chapter reviews the main conclusions of this study and suggests direction for further research.
Chapter 2: Is High School Philosophy Feasible?

An Outdated Question

Scholarly literature on High School Philosophy (HSP) in the English language is scarce and scattered. So much so, in fact, that it might lead one to think either that philosophy is not taught in the secondary school system, or if it is taught, it is not written about. Consider, for instance, the following four passages, each from a different decade, leading up to the present:

Since its inception the basic objective of my course has been to find out if philosophy can be feasibly and practically offered at the secondary level. If it can be, what are the possibilities? To whom should it be offered? What materials should be used? Are there teaching methods especially appropriate for philosophy at the school-age level? And what areas of philosophy should be included? What precisely should be the content of such a course? (Garrett, 1967, p. 243)

The development of reasoning power and critical judgment is one of the major aims of social studies instruction in American high schools. Yet philosophy, the discipline which concerns itself most with reasoning and judgment, has found no place in the social studies Curriculum of American secondary schools. Is this as it should be, or should philosophy be taught in high school? (Link, 1976, p. 164)

What should be surprising is not that a case should be made for philosophy in American public education, but that philosophy has not already become an integral part of its Curriculum already. The habits of mind instilled by philosophy constitute the essence of a liberal education. (Breslin, 1982, p. 366)

Is it time to put philosophy in the school Curriculum? The contributors to this volume believe it is. We are united in the conviction that exposure to philosophical ideas, questions and methods should be part of the basic educational entitlement of all children. In what follows we set out our reasons for this conviction. (Hand & Winstanley, 2008, p. x)

The titles of some of the articles likewise suggest that philosophy has had a hard time finding a place in the secondary school curriculum. Examples include Willis Moore’s “A Pioneer Study of the Teaching of Philosophy in the High School” (1967);

Both these impressions – that philosophy is not taught in the high schools, or if taught, it is not written about – are false. The very existence of the articles just mentioned prove the second impression false, while the fact that philosophy is taught around the world proves the first false as well.

The fact remains, however, that there is little written on the teaching of philosophy in the secondary school system, and the little that actually exists gravitates around the question of whether it is feasible or desirable. If philosophy is taught in high school and if it has been written about, the perennial return of the feasibility question can only be explained by the fact that neither this teaching nor these writings have been sufficiently publicized (since not even philosophy education scholars writing on these topics seem to know of their existence).

Symptomatic of this lack of awareness within the profession is Michael Hand and Carrie Winstanley’s *Philosophy in Schools* (2008), a collection of twelve original articles, published in the same year as I undertook the literature research described in this chapter. Although Hand and Winstanley’s book is extremely recent, unfortunately it does not add much to what was available in the high school philosophy literature in the early 1970’s. The very division of the book into “Part 1: Meeting objections to philosophy in schools”
and “Part 2: Making a case to philosophy in schools” sends us right back to the question of feasibility and desirability, which had already been addressed in the literature in the 1960’s and 1970’s. The issue of diversity, on the other hand, which is the particular focus of this thesis, only appears in one single article in that collection (Winstanley, p. 94) and even there, just in passing.

In this chapter, I argue that there are two main sources of confusion regarding the state of the art in High School Philosophy. The first is that although philosophy is an old subject, it is a relatively new discipline (understood as part of the official educational Curriculum), especially in the English-speaking world. The fact that much scholarly work is produced in English-speaking countries – where traditionally philosophy has not historically been an official component in the secondary school system – explains in part why the question of whether philosophy can be taught in high schools keeps recurring in the (English-speaking) literature.

The second source of confusion arises from conflating HSP with Philosophy for/with Children (P4C). Most of what is written on pre-college philosophy is actually about philosophy for children and not adolescents (Suissa, 2008). Again, Hand and Winstanley’s 2008 collection is a good illustration of this point. Out of the 12 articles in this collection, only one (Suissa) focuses on high school in particular. And while another four (Pring, Brighouse, Murris, Siegel) make passing reference to adolescents, there is no explicit mention of adolescents as a distinct group within the pre-college philosophy initiative.

This focus on P4C is explained in part by the editors’ perception that philosophy at the upper secondary level is in a better situation than in primary and lower-secondary
levels (Hand & Winstanley, 2008, p. xi). By “better situation,” Hand and Winstanley mean “part of the prescribed curricula:” since, as far as they know, none of the “20 more economically developed countries” has philosophy as part of the Curriculum for primary and lower secondary schools.9

But as I show in this chapter, “doing better” can be interpreted in different ways. Although philosophy has enjoyed a greater presence in high schools than in primary schools around the world, HSP has simply not received as much scholarly attention as P4C. Granted, as MacColl (1994) and Hand and Winstanley (2008, p. xii) point out, the term “Philosophy for Children” has become so firmly established in the literature to distinguish Lipman’s approach from the traditional approach to philosophy, that the term is used even when students are adolescents, and not children. But although the acronym P4C can and sometimes is used to apply to adolescents, this occurrence is actually relatively rare.

Hand summarizes his own piece in the collection as follows:

In this chapter, I shall defend the claim that children can be taught philosophy. I shall not defend the stronger claim that they should be so taught. To make the latter case, it would be necessary to show that philosophical inquiry is not only possible for children, but also confers on them some significant educational benefit. I think it does, but the task of

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8 It is not clear, however, what ages count as “upper” and “lower” secondary. In my home country of Brazil, for instance, “secondary” starts at 14-15 and ends at 17-18.

9 This impression is shared by UNESCO: “[T]he growing interest in teaching philosophy to children has developed in response to cultural and political needs, as recognized at the meeting of experts held at UNESCO’s headquarters in Paris in 1998, where participants stressed that it is possible, and even necessary, to present the rudiments of philosophy in simple language comprehensible to young children. Neither the 1951 nor the 1994 UNESCO studies on the teaching of philosophy specifically approached the need to teach philosophy at pre-school and primary levels.” (UNESCO, 2007, p. 3) It is worth pointing out, however, that in 1989, the European Parliament passed a resolution on P4C as a way to foster European heritage (Thinking, 7.4. pp. 16-17). In 1991, the Australia government launched a Philosopher-in Residence Project in the Northern Territory” (Australia, 1993). In this same year, the program “Agenda for Education in Democracy” was launched in Delaware, USA. And in 1995 UNESCO held a conference entitled “Philosophy and Democracy in the World” (Droit, 1995) followed by another one in 1998 on Philosophy for Children. (Reed, 1998). Notice that while some of these initiatives explicitly mention P4C, none of them explicitly mention HSP.
articulating this benefit I leave in the capable hands of other contributors to the present volume. Nevertheless, to the extent that “ought” implies “can,” the argument I shall present for the possibility of teaching philosophy to children may be construed as the first step towards a justification for doing so. (2008, p. 3) [italics in original]

My purpose in this chapter can be accurately summarized by taking this passage from Hand and replacing every occurrence of the word “children” by the word “adolescent.” In remaining chapters of this thesis I examine the question of whether, why and how philosophy should or should not be taught in high schools. But first let me show that it has been taught – and therefore can be taught.
Sources of Confusion

**Philosophy Old or New?**

There are some who think it absurd to teach young people philosophy at school – it is too abstract and intellectually demanding. As in the education of Plato’s guardian class, it should await the attainment of greater maturity, induced no doubt by the study of less demanding pursuits such as mathematics. (Pring, 2008, p. 18)

Is High School Philosophy old or new? An obsolete discipline going back to the time of Plato, or a brand new curricular innovation? These questions are source of much confusion.

UNESCO’s 2007 study refers to secondary school as a “traditional” venue for philosophy education (p. xii). In fact, it even warns that “a crisis of philosophy must be noted in this regard, for the general tendency today is unquestionably towards decline” (UNESCO, 2007, p. 49). Already in 1967 Garrett remarked:

Philosophy at the secondary level, is, of course, no new thing. It has long been offered in European schools, and many parochial schools in our own country make it an important part of their Curriculum. And now in a number of public schools across the country experimental courses, taught by professional philosophers from nearby universities and by in-service teachers, demonstrate that philosophy can be taught with reasonable success. The question can always be asked as to how well it has been taught. But this question is equally appropriate at the college level. (Garrett, 1967, pp. 243-244)

As I pointed out in the introduction to this chapter, the scholarly literature often expresses a feeling of novelty regarding High School Philosophy. In my view, there are two main reasons for this feeling.

The first is that although philosophy is an old field of study, it is a relatively new subject in the official Curriculum in most countries. As I mentioned in the introduction,
Droit marks the French revolution as the beginning of state-run philosophy education.¹⁰ According to the 1994 UNESCO survey, state-run philosophy is most recent in Eastern Europe¹¹ and Africa.¹² But even in places with ancient philosophical traditions, such as Asia,¹³ the Arabic countries¹⁴ and Western Europe,¹⁵ the implementation of philosophy as an official Curriculum discipline is quite recent, often dating from the end of the second World War.¹⁶

While Droit is not necessarily talking about High School Philosophy here, the worry that public schools should offer philosophy to adolescents goes back at least to the 19th century. Hegel, for instance, writes:

¹⁰ “[February 25, 1795] was the day the French Revolution gave birth to the idea of philosophical education organized by the State with the aim of educating citizens morally and intellectually. Before this, the act of philosophical reflection was considered to be a private matter. (…) There was no conception of the State as organizer of philosophical education. Nor was there any specific role for philosophy in the education of citizens.” (Droit, 1995, p. 25)

¹¹ In most of these countries the introduction of philosophy in the official Curriculum dates back to the fall of communism: 1989 for Hungary and Czech Republic, 1990 for Bulgaria and Albania. (cf. Droit, 1995, p. 76) In the former USSR the situation is still unclear, since none of them except for Belarus responded the UNESCO survey. (cf. Droit, 1995, pp. 74-75)

¹² “[T]he introduction of philosophy teaching is most recent in the African states, often dating from the sixties. No reply mentions a date before the beginning of the century, and most indicate dates within the last fifty years.” (Droit, 1995, p. 69)

¹³ In Asia, Japan was the first to introduce state-organized philosophy education, having done so just after the Second World War. Then came Pakistan and India at the time of their separation, in 1947, same year as Thailand. China introduced philosophy in schools in 1950’s, while only in 1983 did the Korean Republic do the same. (cf. Droit, 1995, pp. 72-73)

¹⁴ Likewise, in many Arabic countries the beginning of state-organized philosophy instruction was marked by the end of WWII. Thus, philosophy started to be offered in Lebanon in 1946, in Tunisia in 1948 and in Morocco, 1956. But here the establishment of philosophy instruction is less homogeneous: whereas in Syria it dates back to as far as 1925, in Mauritania it was only established in 1983, while as late as 1995 (at the time of Droit’s report) countries such as Kuwait and Jordan did not even have a department of philosophy. (cf. Droit, 1995, p. 72)

¹⁵ “[U]nder the name of philosophy, Europeans have virtually never stopped teaching, commenting on texts, conducting debates and ‘disputes,’ and producing books of all sorts. For twenty-five centuries! The organization of philosophy teaching by the State represents, of course, a profound change. And this modification is also a recent one: for many European countries, it goes back to the nineteenth century and no further.” (Droit, 1995, p. 78) The dates are 1844 for France (with a major reform in 1925); 1859 for Italy (with a reform in 1923); 1968 for Luxemburg; 1974 for Portugal; 1975 for Spain; 1987 for Denmark and 1990 for the Netherlands. (cf. Droit, 1995, p. 79)

¹⁶ “[T]his type of teaching began in the twentieth century in most countries of the world. In fact, in many states of Africa, Asia, the Pacific, or Latin America, such teaching was established after the second World War, and coincides with their independence, immediately following the adoption of a democratic and republican constitution. It is part of the establishment of a modern education policy.” (Droit, 1995, p. 68)
[S]tudents tend to come to the university without the necessary preparations for the study of philosophy, and [the Royal Department of Religious, Educational and Medical Affairs] charged me with giving an expert opinion on how a purposeful preparation could be arranged at the Gymnasium. (Hegel, 1822/1980, pp. 30-31)


So we must change our image, and stop believing that philosophy teaching belongs to the past. (...) It is also time to stop viewing the teaching of philosophy as elitist and reserved, by choice or by its very essence, to a happy few. Throughout the century, and especially in the last thirty years, the world tendency has on the contrary been towards an increasing democratisation of philosophy teaching, provided to as many students as possible. Thus many countries have created an initiation to philosophy in secondary schools, sometimes covering the last two or three years. (Droit, 1995, p. 68)

**English-speaking versus world.**

This type of confusion regarding the state of HSP is particularly accentuated by the fact that most of the literature examined in this thesis was written in English-speaking contexts, where in general philosophy was never as much of a tradition as in the rest of the world (Droit, 1995; Moore, 1967; Pinto et al., 2009; UNESCO, 2007).

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17 “It should therefore not be imagined that the bases of philosophy teaching can be easily introduced overnight, in countries where an authoritarian regime has long been dominant. (...) A society as different, in history and culture, from the countries of central Europe as Brazilian society seems to have followed a similar route with respect to philosophical instruction: a relatively discrete institution, an authoritarian transformation, a recent renewal.” (Droit, 1995, p. 77)

18 To this first brief overview, should be added the exception represented by the United States, where philosophy teaching does not occupy the place it has in other regions of the world. It is neither a recent creation nor organized by a central authority. (Droit, 1995, p. 80)

“In all the replies received – except those coming from the United States – it seems clearly to be the case that the State is responsible for almost everything in the organization of this teaching. More or less directly, it develops programmes, fixes schedules, trains teachers, recruits and pays them, validates examinations and diplomas.” (Droit, 1995, p. 82)

19 “In numbers of other countries, notably France, the Arabic countries, Yugoslavia and parts of Great Britain, and in Roman Catholic schools in many countries, philosophy has long been an accepted part of the secondary Curriculum. Turning to the United States, the subcommittee cited some two dozen examples of high school courses, six of which were then current, specifically philosophical in content.” (Moore, 1967, p. 216)
Although the different sources seem to think that the United States are the only exception as regards the absence of philosophy in the secondary curriculum, this absence is neither unique to the United States nor are they representative of the state of HSP around the whole world. Rather, they reflect a situation that is specific to the English-speaking world considered as a cultural unit.

The cases of Africa and North America are striking examples of this peculiarity concerning philosophy education in the English-speaking world. While former French colonies in Africa, for instance, have a long tradition of state-organized philosophy instruction, starting as early as 1910 in Benin; in 1948 in Cameroon and Mali, and in the 1960’s in the Ivory Coast, Senegal and Zaire (Droit, 1995, p. 70), in former English colonies philosophy instruction is more recent (1960’s) and restricted to university-level (Droit, 1995, p. 69; UNESCO, 2007).

This same observation applies to North America, where philosophy has historically been part of the educational system in the French-speaking part (Québec), but not in the English-speaking part (Joplin, 2000; UNESCO, 2007). Although philosophy

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20 “In spite of P4C’s documented success, philosophy has been neither widely nor consistently adopted at the high school level, though some exceptions do exist in the United States. Moore (1967) locates scattered examples of high school philosophy courses in approximately two dozen US schools. References to courses offered by individual schools appear in the literature (see, for example, Dorbolo 1997, Decyk 1999), though no state or district curricula contain philosophy courses. Rather, instances of such courses appear to be locally-developed, and anecdotal evidence (see Decyk 1999) suggests that university faculty members have played an important role in establishing such courses in their own communities.” (Pinto et al., 2009, p. 1)

21 “[T]he almost constitutional absence of philosophy in secondary education in English-speaking countries should be noted. At the very best it is available as an option, which is the case in the United Kingdom and in certain schools in North America.” (UNESCO, 2007, p. 51)

22 “One thing that stands out overall is the absence of philosophy as a mandatory subject in English-speaking countries. As one Malawian writer put it, Malawi ‘being an English-speaking country, philosophy is only taught here at university.’ In South Africa it is the same. This is a phenomenon that gives food for thought about the impact at both the pedagogical and the academic levels of teaching philosophy in schools, not only because the English-speaking world today represents the leading community of philosophical academics in quantitative terms, but also because this absence calls into question the relation between philosophical education and democratic consciousness.” (UNESCO, 2007, pp. 76-77)

23 “Aside from a philosophy course introduced in 1996 in certain secondary schools in Ontario, philosophy in Canada is taught at the post-secondary and university levels in what are known as Junior Colleges in the
has been present in individual schools in North America, it has not been part of the official Curriculum anywhere other than in Ontario. In fact, in 1995 – the year that Droit’s report was published – Ontario became the first English-speaking jurisdiction in North America (and possibly in the entire world) to offer philosophy as an official component of the high school Curriculum (cf. Joplin, 2000; UNESCO, 2007).

The significance of this fact has not yet been fully apprehended even by specialists in pre-college philosophy. For instance, Hand and Winstanley mention that “only a minority of US and Canadian high schools offer elective classes in Philosophy” (p. xi), seeming unaware of the fact that Ontario made philosophy an official part of the Curriculum back in the mid-1990’s. Likewise, in the introduction to their collection Philosophy in Schools (2008), Hand and Winstanley mention that philosophy is a core element in the upper secondary school Curriculum in France (compulsory for the general Baccalaureat), Spain (core for each of the four types of Bachilerato), Italy (mandatory for all students in both liceo classico and scientifico), Hungary (mandatory for all students in the National Core Curriculum) and, in addition, the International Baccalaureat has...

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24 “Philosophy courses are offered in some secondary schools in the United States, although they are not prescribed by the national school system. They are in fact complementary courses left to the initiative of each academic establishment, or to the good intentions of a few teachers. Rarely will a secondary school hire a teacher primarily in order to teach philosophy. This remains a secondary duty given, if need be, to teachers of other subjects who happen to have some competence in the subject. On the other hand, philosophy courses are regularly offered in the very prestigious Prep Schools, the jewels of secondary schooling in the United States.” (UNESCO, 2007, p. 77)

25 David Joplin – one of the spearheads in this process – attributes as the success of philosophy in Ontario to “good organization, effective long-range planning, and well-targeted lobbying efforts on the part of a handful of dedicated philosophers and teachers in the universities and secondary schools.” He also cites the moral support of “receptive policy makers and administrators in the Curriculum Branch of the Ontario Ministry of Education” and “moral and practical support from the Departments of Philosophy in universities and colleges across Ontario.” “It has also helped that those involved in lobbying for the course and developing it have maintained strategically a low profile, in order not to attract the attention of education interest groups that might regard philosophy as an inappropriate subject for high school education.” (Joplin, 2000, p. 132).
Theory of Knowledge as one of its three core units (Hand & Winstanley, 2008, p. xi; cf. Siegel, 2008, p. 78). Notice that no English-speaking country appears in this list (not even the United Kingdom, where the collection was published).

This type of glaring absence is not uncommon. The preface for UNESCO’s 2007 report, for instance, has a section with a paragraph for each major region of the world, which includes Africa, the Arab countries, Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean. While one can argue that the paragraph on Europe includes the situation in the United Kingdom, and that Australia is likewise included in the paragraph on the Asia-Pacific region, there is no mention of North America in this particular section (UNESCO, 2007, pp. xii-xiii).

Granted, the case of Ontario is relatively recent and it would be somewhat unfair to fault Hand and Winstanley (2008) or even UNESCO for not doing full justice to its significance. But this only reinforces my point that the lack of exchange concerning the state of high school philosophy around the world – and in the English-speaking world in particular – is severe.

These observations drive home the point that there is a great need for studies on high school philosophy, especially in the English language. In addition, there is a great need for the studies that exist to become better publicized, so that high school philosophy pioneers may know about each others’ work – and maybe even work together. With this in mind, in the next section I present a brief overview of all the academic studies that I have been able to find on HSP in the English language.
**HSP is taught, but not studied**

If there is a message to be conveyed by this study, it would certainly [be] that of exhorting us to consider the teaching of philosophy to be necessary and something to be reckoned with - a message already conveyed in the previous studies realised by UNESCO on the subject, and one with a resonance and pointedness more than ever relevant to our times. (UNESCO, 2007, p. xii)

As I mentioned above, literature on HSP is small, and the few studies which actually exist for the most part do not seem aware of the existence of each other. A second reason for the perceived lack of precedent for HSP, therefore, is that although philosophy is present in high schools, high school philosophy is not as present in the scholarly literature.

Granted, over the decades, UNESCO has launched various projects to obtain information about philosophy education at all levels and to offer programs and guidelines for the expansion of philosophy teaching around the world. Its first Philosophy Programme dates back to 1946, shortly after the end of WWII and of UNESCO’s own founding. Another one was launched in May-June 1950 and carried out in 1953 as a survey directed by Georges Canguilhem. In 1978, yet another resolution was adopted (3/3-3/1), resulting in a new series of five volumes on philosophy education, published between 1984 and 1993 (Droit, 1995, p. 33).26

In 1993-1994 the *Democracy and Philosophy in the World* programme was launched, aiming to update Canguilhem’s 1953 survey (Mayor, in Droit, 1995, pp. 9-10; Droit, 1995, pp. 31-32, UNESCO, 2005, p. 4). This program consisted of four stages:

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26 “In 1978, the Member States requested UNESCO to prepare studies on teaching philosophy and philosophical research in each region of the world. This consulting of the regions, which spread out over a decade, had as its goal a vast inquiry especially dealing with interdisciplinary practices in the world.” (UNESCO, 2007, p. xii)
1. “a survey addressed to all Member States of UNESCO;”
2. “meetings of experts to develop proposals for action;”
3. “preparation of specific reports on regions and themes;”
4. “publication and exploitation of the data collected.” (Droit, 1995, p. 45)

Droit’s project was followed up in 2005 by an “Intersectorial Strategy” and in 2007 by a book entitled “A School of Freedom.”

Although UNESCO’s plans to implement their intersectorial strategy in philosophy include goals such as “to promote the teaching of philosophy at the secondary and university levels” and “to disseminate information and materials” (UNESCO, 2005, p. 2), and although the expected results of this strategy include the enhancement of teaching of philosophy at the secondary as well as at the university level (UNESCO, 2005, pp. 2-3), studies on secondary school philosophy are still scarce or at least poorly publicized.

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27 “A detailed questionnaire was prepared. The 82 questions from 1952 were reformulated, updated, made more precise, subdivided. (…) It should also be noted that there were responses from all the regions of the globe. (…) As far as we know, this is the first time so large a set of data on the place of philosophy has been directly collected from the best informed sources.” (Droit, 1995, pp. 45-46)
28 “The ‘second phase’ of the programme consisted of two international days of study, organized by UNESCO at its headquarters (Place de Fontenoy, Paris) on February 15 and 16, 1995.” (Droit, 1995, p. 46)
29 “The third source of reflection for the programme ‘Philosophy and democracy in the world’ consists of working documents specially commissioned by UNESCO. Ten reports were prepared. They were intended to shed light on specific aspects of the situation of philosophy in one or another region of the world, or to clarify certain aspects of the current state of relations between philosophy and democracy, relating to the development of the concept of citizenship, or the birth of multimedia.” (Droit, 1995, p. 46)
30 This program is “the result of a two-year consultation process in which Permanent Delegations to UNESCO, National Commissions for UNESCO, 500 NGOs and 600 universities, as well as approximately 150 philosophers and eminent personalities, were invited to give comments and suggestions (Annex I).” (UNESCO, 2005, p. 1)
31 “This study serves as a springboard for the other activities set forth in the Intersectoral Strategy on Philosophy, especially help in formulating recommendations for policies regarding teaching philosophy at secondary and university levels that would include teaching different philosophical traditions as well as comparative philosophy, training and methods of evaluation, the development of manuals and exchange programmes…” (UNESCO, 2007, p. xv) “We have thus naturally given this study a striking title: ‘Philosophy, a School of Freedom.’ (…) Constantly concerned to be exhaustive, through the multiple facets of teaching, it presents the reform initiatives of the past, those underway or planned. In the short term, the study presents a snapshot of the teaching of philosophy, one that is as faithful and well-documented as possible. In the medium term, its intent is to help Member States with their future choices, because it offers inspirations, ideas or experiences.” (UNESCO, 2007, pp. xvii-xviii)
For example, a Scholars’ Portal search of any combination of “philosoph*” and either “high school,” “secondary school” or “adolescen*,” as titles, in both Arts & Humanities and Social Sciences results in fewer than one hundred titles. By the time one filters all the duplicates, and all those that use the term “philosophy” not as a discipline but more of a “philosophy of living,” one is left with fewer than forty titles. Of these, I managed to retrieve and read 30, which can be divided into four clusters: (a) the 1958 APA and the fall 1967 issue of Educational Theory; (b) the 1968-1971 CCSA-Carnegie Experiment and its follow-ups; (c) Late 1970s to the early 1980s, which could be labeled “Back to Feasibility” and (d) 1990 and after: “Interesting Exceptions.”

The first cluster of articles on High School Philosophy detected by a Scholars’ Portal search were all published in the same issue of Educational Theory (17.3, July 1967), which is entirely dedicated to high school philosophy. The volume presents eight articles, of which particularly worth looking at are the three by the editor, Willis Moore: the first explains the purpose and plan of the issue, the last summarizes the issue, but the most important is his four-page executive summary of the APA 1958 report.

In 1958, the American Philosophical Association created a special committee for high school philosophy. Although I was unable to find the document on this by the APA itself, Moore (1967b) provides a good summary of it:

This report, however incomplete and inconclusive, is the best made on this topic to date and is, therefore, worth our attention. Permission has been
obtained for publication of a summary of its content. Roughly, the report does three things: it lists, with brief descriptions and evaluations, examples of the teaching of philosophy in high schools here and elsewhere; it presents the common arguments for and against such teaching; and it offers the subcommittee’s evaluations of these arguments, with these last constituting at least an indirect endorsement of the general project.

(Moore, 1967b, p. 216)

A second cluster of literature on high school philosophy obtained through Scholars’ Portal gravitates around the 3-year project (1968-1971) funded by the Carnegie Foundation in 10 schools in Chicago. This project resulted in two major reports (Bosley, 1975; Thomson, 1971a) as well as a few short articles, most of which are compiled in the Newsletter34 for the Centre for High School Studies, an institution founded as a result of this experiment.35

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34 Volume 1, number 1 could not be found.
35 Volume 1, number 2 is listed under the name of Larson (1972), its editor. It is 14-pages long and features 1) a summary of Thomson’s 1971 report, by Thomson himself; 2) a short article by Reber (who also published a short description of the CCSA-Carnegie Philosophy project in the NASSP Bulletin in 1971); 3) a review of Thomson’s report by Harold Titus (not particularly remarkable); and 4) the longest and most interesting feature of the four, an article by Fay Sawyer entitled “Philosophy and History of Science in Ghetto High Schools” (the only one so far that challenges “intellectual apartheid” [p. 5]).

Volume 1, number 3 (published October 1972), volume 2, number 1 (February 1973) and volume 2, number 2 (December 1973) are published as appendices to Bosley’s report. Volume 1, number 3 is only two pages long, and merely reports the reception of a NEH grant for the 1972-1973 year, the retirement of Hugo Thomson, who is replaced by Paul Bosley, and other administrative notices.

Volume 2, number 1 starts with various announcements (Placement Sub-Committee for High School Philosophy Teachers in the Dec 1972 APA; request for funds for follow-up projects to improve Curriculum and teacher training – as described in Bosley’s report). The remaining eleven pages contain five short articles:

1) Steve Herman’s “From Empathy to Quarks,” a short essay on classroom strategy for teaching Kant’s a priori and a posteriori concepts;
2) Donald Harward’s “The Delaware Program,” an insightful description of a programme run by the University of Delaware from 1971 to 1973 in which philosophy graduate students went to local high schools to teach philosophy;
3) Caroline Sweers’s “The Question of a Starting Point,” a page-long article on the crisis that inevitably ensues when students realize that they are not philosophers;
4) Richard Nagel’s “A Mini-Course Approach,” a description of three one-week long courses, on the topics of “What is Philosophy?”, “What is Grammar?” and “Language and Mathematics”;
5) Pilar Liebling’s “Teaching Philosophy in Argentine Secondary Schools”, which, as the title implies, describes the author’s experience in Argentina. Liebling’s article is the most interesting of the five published in this issue, especially in the way she strives to balance flexibility and discipline. Flexibility is the core of the article; there is, however, no mention of the issue of diversity.

Volume 2, number 2, published December 1973, contains 6 pages and is mainly devoted to announcing the reception of the Rockefeller Foundation grant, which funds the follow-up activities described in Bosley’s
A third cluster of results consist in articles published in the late 1970’s and early 1980’s. Despite the 1958 APA report and the 1967 issue of Educational Theory, despite the 1968-1971 CCSA-Carnegie High School Philosophy experiment and its follow-ups and despite all of the developments reported in Thinking (1973); Teaching Philosophy (1974) and Metaphilosophy (1976), the high school philosophy literature available through Scholars’ Portal for the rest of the 1970’s and most of the 1980’s is disappointingly scarce. Even more disappointing is that most of what actually exists seems to return to a mere consideration of whether high school philosophy is feasible and/or desirable, almost as if the idea had not been conceived of before. Representative of this are the Link-Schimmels interaction (1976-1977); Wiggins’ series of articles (1976, 1980, 1981) and Breslin’s “A Case for Philosophy in the American High School Curriculum” (1982).

Report (Exploratory Conference, Summer Institute and In-Service Training). This issue also includes an announcement of a new APA High School Committee whose mission includes, among other things, “to redraft the 1958 statement on high school philosophy.” (p.1/63) The issue ends with Karen Soderlind’s “The Amherst High School Program,” which took place in the spring of 1973. I do not know if any other issues were published after 1973 (as a matter of fact, I do not know whether the Center itself is still in existence).

A direct consequence of the study described in Thomson’s report was the foundation of the Center for High School Philosophy. Bosley’s Center for High School Philosophy, 1972-1974, A Progress Report gives a historical background and describes the main activities of the Center (Bosley, 1975, p. 1). Particularly remarkable in this report was the connection the Center had from the very beginning with Matthew Lipman (p. 29) and Gareth Matthews (pp. 1, 29), two of the pioneers in Philosophy for/with Children, as well as Jane Roland Martin (p. 1) and Lawrence Kohlberg (p. 30).

It is worth noting that none of these three publications are detected through a Scholars’ Portal search. It is almost as if all these publications were in completely parallel universes.

Link’s short article, entitled “Should Philosophy Be Taught to High School Students” considers some practical and theoretical objections to, as well as benefits of, introducing philosophy in high school. Schimmels replies that Link’s argument misses the point of what high school should really be doing, since, in Schimmel’s perception, high school students lack the writing/vocabulary/critical skills to engage in philosophy. Neither author makes any reference to previous literature on HSP.

Wiggins (1976, 1980, 1981) also returns to the issue of making a case for HSP, having as his main refrain the idea that philosophy’s meta-disciplinarity helps to make other HS subjects such as science and math more meaningful.

Francis Brelin’s “A Case for Philosophy in the American High School Curriculum” (1982) is a two-page article that does exactly what the title indicates without making any reference to the preceding literature on the topic. It thus reinforces my point that part of the reason why the feasibility question occur is that the high school philosophy authors are not aware of previous studies.
Particularly interesting is Wiggins’ “Philosophy and the High School Curriculum” (1980) for the way he refers to other studies to describe the situation of HSP in the United States at the time of writing. Citing an unpublished doctoral thesis by Mary McConnell (1976), Wiggins claims that in 1980 there were 160 high school philosophy courses, involving approximately 3,500 students; yet, there were few studies on the issue:

There exists a serious absence of substantive information about current programs, their rationale, and their effectiveness. Further, the absence of appropriate curricular, text, and certification standards and the failure of the American Philosophical Association to look into this matter until very recently has resulted in a chicken-and-egg problem; the APA cannot study the matter thoroughly without referring to existing programs, and programs cannot easily arise without structural support in the form of certification procedures and agreed-upon goals, methods and texts. (Wiggins, 1980, p. 41)

On the one hand, Wiggins’ chicken-and-egg description is accurate and explains why the feasibility question keeps returning. Ironically, however, Wiggins falls prey to the very problem he so accurately describes. Often it seems that McConnell’s thesis was not only Wiggins’ main source, but his only source. For instance, although Wiggins was aware of the existence of the CCSA-Carnegie HS experiment, he seems not to have had direct contact with Thomson’s report or any of its follow-ups, or any other part of the literature, for that matter. He claims, for instance, that “the formal establishment of a Pre-College committee took place in 1979, 24 years after the previous report on the possibility of pre-college philosophy” (Wiggins, 1980, p. 41, footnote). To my

40 “What is known about current philosophy offerings can be found in an unpublished dissertation by Mary McConnell (1976) of the University of Colorado. McConnell’s excellent study summarizes the history of the pre-college philosophy movement, the pilot programs conducted, the results of her survey of current teachers of philosophy in high schools and elementary schools, and the supporting educational, historical, and philosophical literature on the subject. To my knowledge, no other such study exists.” (Wiggins, 1980, p. 42)

41 “In addition, McConnell summarizes the results of the extensive Carnegie-Commission-funded feasibility study… (…) [I]n her follow-up, McConnell found that only half of the pilot schools retained philosophy courses in 1976 owing to teacher attrition and budgetary difficulties.” (Wiggins, 1980, p. 42)
knowledge, the APA addressed the issue of pre-college philosophy in the years 1958, 1973, 1974, and 1976.\footnote{Bosley’s report makes reference to an APA meeting in April 1973 resulting in the creation of a sub-committee on pre-college philosophy. It also mentions a symposium on secondary school philosophy in December 1974 (Bosley, 1975, pp. 18, 21).} The report on the possibility of pre-college philosophy was dated 1958 and the committee was officially established in 1976. I still have not found any other data concerning APA activities in the years mentioned by Wiggins (1979 or 1955).

A fourth cluster of results of a Scholars’ Portal search on High School Philosophy consists in three articles published in the 1990’s or 2000’s. “Interesting exceptions” would make a good label for this group of articles not only because they are interestingly different from most of the articles described so far, but also because they themselves describe interestingly exceptional experiences of teaching philosophy to people who are somewhat different from the “average” high school student (whatever “average” may mean).

Both Parker English and Thomas Foster’s “Philosophy courses for gifted high school students” (1996) and Hillary Meredith Garland’s “Using philosophy to differentiate the Curriculum for gifted high school students” (1998) study the effects of introducing philosophy to a special type of high school students: namely, the so-called “gifted” or “highly talented.” Gehrett’s “Doing Philosophy in High School: One Teacher’s Account” (2000), on the other hand, shows that philosophy can be beneficial to adolescents who, far from being considered “gifted,” face instead significant challenges in getting an academic education.

Part of the reason that the feasibility question keeps returning, therefore, is that there is not much being written. Although I do not assume that any Scholars’ Portal
search can be exhaustive, I think that the scanty results that I found are representative of where scholarly philosophical attention is – or fails to be. There is simply very little in the scholarly literature on pre-college philosophy that concerns adolescents as a specific age group.

Worse than this, however, is that the existing literature, small as it is, does not build upon previous achievements already studied and reported. Hand and Winstanley’s collection, for instance, published as recently as 2008 seems completely unaware of all the developments just described. This is despite the fact that, already in 1976 the APA gave recommendations such as the following:

I: Those involved in the field of pre-college philosophy publish more widely, not only so that the Association will be kept informed, but also so that they will be reminded to develop their practical work upon solid theoretical foundations. (APA, 1976, p. 89)

VII. Each undergraduate and graduate department of philosophy establish its own Committee on Pre-College Philosophy, the function of such committees being:

A. To study, discuss, and evaluate this report;

B. To initiate discussions with their colleagues in schools of education regarding pre-college philosophy;

C. To offer, with their colleagues in the school of education, their support and services to their local Board of Education, elementary and secondary teachers, and school administrators;

D. To prepare with their colleagues a statement regarding the impact of pre-college philosophy on their own undergraduate and graduate program;

E. To communicate regularly with the Subcommittee regarding their discussions, actions and accomplishments. (APA, 1976, p. 89)

This is particularly serious if one keeps in mind that these recommendations are about pre-college philosophy in general, and not about high school philosophy.
specifically. In the next section, I consider what has been published about HSP in *Thinking: the Journal of Philosophy for Children*. This overview of the most comprehensive journal on pre-college philosophy will confirm the impression that though Scholars’ Portal search is not exhaustive, it is representative of the scattered state of the academic literature on HSP in the English language.

**HSP versus P4C: insights from Thinking.**

A thorough browse through *Thinking* is likewise disappointing: from the journal’s first edition in 1979 to the most recent edition published at the time of this literature search, in 2008, there were only six articles that explicitly mention “high school,” “secondary school” or “adolescents” in the title: Bandman (1982), Needleman (1982), Camhy & Iberer (1989), Benjamin (1990), Strong (2004) and Carter (2006).

Of these six, two had already been picked up in the Scholars’ Portal search (Needleman, 1982; Benjamin, 1990). This leaves us with four new articles, only two of which were published in the last 18 years. Neither of these two recent articles, however, are about philosophy as a discipline per se. Rather, both Strong’s “Voyaging to the Outer Limits of Education: Reflections on P4C” (2004) and Carter’s Developing Communities of Inquiry in the Secondary School Creative Arts Classroom” (2006) present anecdotal

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43 I am leaving out Scott (1982). Even though it appears in a section entitled “Philosophy in Secondary School,” it is really about 11-12 year-old students in British “Comprehensive Schools.” The precise mark where childhood ends and adolescence begins is fuzzy, but I am more inclined to take 13 as the younger extreme of the spectrum – if for no other reason than for the fact that thirteen ends in “teen” as in “teenager” and twelve does not.

44 By contrast, both of the articles that had come up in the Scholars’ Portal search (Needleman, 1982; Benjamin, 1990) treat high school philosophy as a discipline of its own, rather than a methodology (even though Benjamin thinks philosophy is best introduced in high school as an extra-curricular activity, and not as another class to be added to the Curriculum). The crucial notion of P4C as a methodology is the concept of "community of inquiry", in which the teacher works not as a dispenser of knowledge, but rather as a facilitator, a "first among equals" in a community of co-inquirers. More on this later.
evidence for the application of P4C methodology in other disciplines of the secondary Curriculum: History and Political Science for Strong and Arts for Carter.

This leaves us with only two more articles. Using the example of a 15-year-old Amish girl whose parents did not allow her to attend school, Bandman’s “The Adolescent’s Rights to Freedom, Care and Enlightenment” (1982) is an interesting article on the issue of whether the rights of parents to choose the best for their children trumps the rights of adolescents to have a say about their own education. It does not, however, address the discipline of philosophy itself at all, not even P4C as a type of pedagogical methodology in the way of Strong (2004) and Carter (2006).

Camhy and Iberer’s “Philosophy for Children: A Research Project for further mental and personality development of primary and secondary pupils” (1988) in turn is a study rich with graphs reporting the results of applying the New Jersey Test of Reasoning skills and the Torrance test for creative thinking on primary and secondary school students.

Even though most of it is not specifically about high schoolers, Thinking has published enough on issues such as education for democracy and the rationales and challenges involved in introducing philosophy in schools in different parts of the world for it to count as an important resource for anyone interested in high school philosophy. And there is always a chance that an article may be about High School philosophy even when it does not say so in the title.

Encouraged by this thought, I sifted once again through every issue of Thinking (from 1979 through 2008) and read every single article that suggested any connection to (a) introducing pre-college philosophy in a new country (the how and why, developments
in supporting legislation, teacher training, etc); and (b) philosophy as part of an education for democracy (what does that mean and what can philosophy do to help?). I was particularly interested to see if any of these conceptions touched on issues of social inclusion. Thus, anything that suggested any connection to issues of accommodating different levels of academic or physical ability, economical status, ethnicity and nationality, different types of learning, or different types of oppression, etc, made it into my reading list – to a grand total of another 151 articles. Among these, I found only another five that actually dealt specifically with adolescents, despite not mentioning it in the title. These five, added with the previous six, total 11 articles specifically about adolescents in 30 years, which is not a lot.

Hegel’s “On Teaching Philosophy in the Gymnasium” (1822/1980) is a reprint of a letter which Hegel wrote to the Royal Department of Religious, Educational and Medical Affairs, as “an expert opinion on how a purposeful preparation could be arranged at the Gymnasium” given that “students tend to come to the university without the necessary preparations for the study of philosophy.” (Hegel, 1822/1980, pp. 30-31). The “gymnasium” is the level of schooling that comes immediately before university (and therefore can count as equivalent to High School), where Hegel taught philosophy for a number of years.

Splitter’s “On Thinking for Oneself” (1986) is a reprint of a commencement speech given to High School graduates, the only piece specifically about adolescents in the section called “Philosophy for Children in Australia” published in the 6.3 issue. It does not deal with philosophy explicitly, however, other than for establishing a

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45 Hegel (1822/1980), Splitter (1986), Lim (1987), Nisbet (1991) and Lim (2003). Of these, the most relevant for my study were Hegel (1822/1980) and Nisbet (1991).
connection between the author (a philosopher) and the audience (adolescents), both of whom are often thought to live outside “the real world.”

Nisbet’s “Letter from Europe” (1991) would be unremarkable, were it not for a reference to a Portuguese study with adolescents (13-17 years old) started in 1986 in the University of Lisbon. This study by M. Odete Valente, called “Projeto Dianoia” with its 91-page long bibliography would be of great interest to those interested in HSP. Unfortunately, I could only find a shorter eight-page version.47

Lim’s “Crossing the Chopsticks: Handling Chopsticks and Handling Lives” (1987) and “Introducing Asian Philosophy and Concepts into the Community of Inquiry” (2003) address the same issue: how to counteract Westernization in Singaporean High Schools. Lim presents suggestions for how to indigenize the P4C program so as to include a list of Asian values that needed to be “inculcated” in the Singaporean youth, such as valuing society above self, family as the building block of society, the importance of resolving conflict through consensus and the need for social harmony.

The six articles on adolescents published in Thinking are a good sample of claims about the benefits of pre-college philosophy (e.g. “critical and creative thinking,” “right to have a say over one's own education”). It also gives some glimpses into the important distinctions between philosophy as a body of knowledge as traditionally conceived and P4C as a methodology. Also in need of consideration is philosophy’s alleged role against harmful influences.

Later in this thesis I examine in more detail the secondary literature on P4C materials to see to what extent they address the issue of inclusion. In particular, I analyze how much of it takes into account not only specificities of race, gender and social

condition, but also the specificities of adolescents as a distinct age group, different from children and different from college students and equally deserving of being included and represented in the philosophy literature. The purpose of this section, however, was just to give a brief overview of how little attention is paid to adolescents in the P4C literature.
Feasible? Yes. Good? That’s a separate question

Philosophy curricula is available today in one form or another for grades K-12. In this sense pre-college philosophy is feasible. (…) Other questions of feasibility remain unanswered: Will a number of coherent pre-college philosophy programs of philosophical and pedagogical quality be developed? Will provisions be taken for the training of teachers? Will our colleges and universities restructure their programs to meet the need of teacher education and more adequately prepared students? The feasibility of pre-college philosophy depends also upon the answer to these and similar questions which relate directly to the response of the Association. (APA, 1976, p. 85)

This study is not an end, it is a justified appeal to strengthen philosophy teaching and to introduce it where it does not exist. It is a means of familiarising people with philosophical practices that are still too far below the surface and sometimes marginal. (UNESCO, 2007, p. xxi)

The scarcity of empirical studies on the effects of high school philosophy makes an appeal to precedents an onerous source of support for those struggling to keep a philosophy program in their schools. Moreover, the desirability question is at least as recurrent in the literature as the feasibility question, as are worries concerning possible negative effects of high school philosophy. It would be irresponsible for any defendant of HSP not to take these difficulties and concerns seriously.

But if the shortage of empirical studies about the impact of HSP on adolescents makes an appeal to precedents difficult, it also means, on the other hand, that there is little empirical justification for worries regarding possible negative effects. On the contrary, the scanty empirical evidence on HSP available seems favourable rather than

48 Cf. Moore: “we cannot appeal to precedent in defense of the proposal in question but must rest our case on observed consequences of experimental trial measured against educational and general social goals. The necessity of appealing to experimental cases, coupled with the fact that descriptions of such are not generally available, have made it expedient that we include such descriptions in this treatment of the topic.” (Moore, 1967, p. 203)

49 As the 2007 UNESCO study puts it: “At a time when teaching is going through marked transformations, it would be too simple to sing the praises of philosophy without looking at the question of its pedagogical utility, its function, and the limits on its teaching. Yet there is a serious lack of studies and of recent data here. The present study, and the responses to the UNESCO questionnaire used to collect data for this study, have filled an important gap…” (UNESCO, 2007, p. 50)
against it (Bosley, 1975; Garrett, 1967; Joplin, 2000; McDonough et al, 2009; Pinto et al., 2009; Thomson, 1971; UNESCO, 2007). As David Joplin says: “It appears that concerns that exposure to philosophical inquiry may harm a young student’s intellectual or emotional development have failed to materialize.” (Joplin, 2000, p. 134)

Leroy Garrett’s *Ten Years in High School Philosophy* (1967), for instance, describes the author’s success introducing philosophy in three high schools (one in Illinois, one in Texas and one in West Virginia) starting in 1957:

Each of the three schools received the project with enthusiasm and cooperated in every way toward its success. The problems we supposed we would encounter never arose. Due to curricula that were already crowded, we feared that the schools would not have room for anything else. But since Sputnik and the evaluation of the high schools by James Bryant Conant, administrators are more conscious of the superior students and are now eager to arrange special programs for them. Our work in philosophy has therefore been accepted as part of an overall effort to upgrade the offerings for talented students. (p. 241)

Hugo Thomson’s “High School Philosophy, Report of a Feasibility Study,” 1968-1971 and Paul Bosley’s follow-up report, entitled “Center for High School Philosophy, 1972-1974: A Progress Report” (1975) are another absolute “must read” for anyone interested in High School Philosophy. Thomson’s report gives a thorough description of the Carnegie project: its general structure, the ten schools which participated, the course materials and teaching approaches used. It also includes students’ evaluations during and after the course, as well as recommendations for future studies. Bosley’s follow-up report, on the other hand, primarily addresses the issues of teacher training and Curriculum development (Bosley, 1975, p. 9). Besides historical notes (such as minutes

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Among the Scholars’ Portal search results are three summary versions of Thomson’s report: as a four-page stand-alone (available in microfilm at OISE); a two-page entry in the Newsletter for the Centre for High School Philosophy (Volume 1, number 2); and an article published in the Journal of Critical Analysis (1970, volume 2, not available in the U of T library system). Neither of the two summaries I read conveyed what I thought were the major insights of the full report, namely, its concern about the specificities of the age group, of the particular school communities and of the teachers.
of the advisory board and Curriculum consultations), the report includes thorough descriptions of three follow-up projects funded by the Rockefeller Foundation: an exploratory conference (Bosley, 1975, pp. 13, 22-25), a 3-week summer institute for teachers (Bosley, 1975, pp. 14, 25-27) and an in-service training programme (Bosley, 1975, pp. 16, 27-29).

Unfortunately, the Carnegie experiment is now about 40 years old and even its most recent follow-up to my knowledge (Bosley, 1975) is already over 30 years old. The only other study of this kind that I know of is the Ontario High School Project. Through “a survey administered to high school philosophy teachers, as well as follow-up interviews,” this project had as its objectives:

(1) to determine how teachers conceptualize their ideal aims and pedagogies of teaching philosophy;

(2) to determine the differences in teaching methods between teachers with and without formal training in philosophy;

(3) to describe teachers’ experiences of dealing with conflicts and controversies in their philosophy classes; and

(4) to investigate whether religious education requirements/expectations come into conflict with philosophical rigor in Catholic schools. (Pinto et al., 2009, p. 3)\(^{51}\)

My purpose in this section was to point to a few cases where HSP program was successfully implemented, to drive home the point that although the difficulties facing HSP are real, they are not insurmountable. A separate question, of course, is whether

\(^{51}\) “A total of 53 high school philosophy teachers responded. While the actual number of philosophy teachers in Ontario is unknown, it is offered in approximately 300 schools, suggesting a population of at least 300 or more teachers who may teach one or more section of philosophy per year. We can estimate that our respondents likely represent between 14% and 18% of the population. Approximately three-quarters of respondents are male and one-quarter female. Just over half teach in a public secondary school, while the remainder teaches in separate Catholic and/or private schools.” (Pinto et al., 2009, p. 4, my emphasis)
these difficulties are worth the trouble surmounting and if so, why and how. These are the questions that I start to address in the next chapter.
Chapter 3: Is High School Philosophy Desirable? Two Approaches

As I pointed out in the introduction to this thesis, the scholarly literature on High School Philosophy gravitates around the questions of feasibility and desirability. In the last chapter, I addressed the question of feasibility, arguing that this question is now outdated, given that philosophy is currently taught in high schools around the world. This chapter addresses the question of desirability.

Just as a satisfactory answer to a question of feasibility requires an account of probable obstacles and strategies for how to overcome them, a satisfactory answer to a question of desirability requires an account of probable objections and counter-arguments for how to address these objections. However, if one looks at arguments offered in the last few decades for the inclusion of philosophy in the secondary school system, one notices an interesting pattern. In my examination of the literature on High School Philosophy, I found that there were mainly two distinctive “moments” in the way in which this question was addressed, corresponding roughly to two different perceptions of the novelty and the obstacles and objections facing HSP: a first moment in which adolescents’ capacity to do philosophy was in debate and a second moment in which it was generally assumed that everyone, even adolescents and children, could and should do philosophy.

At a first moment, lists of objections and counter-objections to HSP featured prominently in the literature, ranging from issues such as whether students were intellectually or psychologically ready to study philosophy to whether schools would be able to accommodate such inclusion in the Curriculum. To meet these objections, many of the proponents of HSP recommended a selective approach to the offering of
philosophy in High Schools: that philosophy be offered only to senior students (Garrett, 1967), to those university-bound (Hicks & Holland, 1989; Ontario, 2009) or to those considered gifted (English & Foster, 1996; Garland, 1998). This approach attempts to minimize the harm presented by the foreseen objections by reducing the number of students exposed to it: the number of adolescents that would thus receive philosophy education would be relatively small, and consisting mainly of those already with high intellectual achievement.

However, whereas the list of objections and counter-objections used to feature prominently from 1958 up to the early 1980’s, it has since then practically disappeared. Part of the reason why considerations of possible objections to HSP have fallen into disuse was that it was replaced by the question of whether it would be appropriate to include philosophy earlier in the school system. In other words, with the advent of “Philosophy for Children” (P4C) in the 1970’s, the frame of the question “should philosophy be offered in schools” shifted from adolescents to children. The assumption must have been either that objections against HSP had already been settled (e.g., Hand & Winstanley, 2008), or that, to the extent that one addressed the objections against philosophy with children, the objections against philosophy with adolescents were also taken care of.

An important shift in this attitude towards pre-college philosophy was the postulate that “all people can and should study philosophy.” Thus, UNESCO’s 2007 document entitled Philosophy: School for Freedom emphasizes: “This message means to convey a strong conviction: the right to philosophy for all.” (UNESCO, 2007, p. xv, my
Likewise, Hand and Winstanley point out that even though the contributors to their collection do not always agree, what brings them together is that they are “all firmly committed to the view that philosophy should, in some form and for some portion of compulsory schooling, be part of the Curriculum” (Hand & Winstanley, 2008, p. xiv). This wish is already reality in countries such as Brazil, where in July 2008 philosophy became mandatory for all high school students across the country.

The postulate that everyone should do philosophy seems to have overruled most of the previous objections against HSP. It is not that there have not been arguments for why philosophy should be taught at HS: arguments for why philosophy should be included in HS continue to appear in the literature. Harder to find, however, are considerations of possible reasons why it should not – that is, examination of ways in which HSP could be harmful or undesirable are no longer as widespread. The problem with simply listing reasons why philosophy is allegedly desirable to everyone, however, is that it assumes that philosophy is equally and unequivocally beneficial to everyone, without asking “how so?,” “who is everyone” and “is there any potential for harm?”

I should clarify that my main concern in this discussion is not to question adolescents’ or even children’s capacity for philosophy. What worries me about the notion of “philosophy for all” is that, as I argue below, both terms “philosophy” and “all” are too broad and too narrow, and thus require further scrutiny. More strongly, although I believe that HSP is desirable, I do not believe that it is unqualifiedly so. In fact, what I

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52 “All human beings have an equal capacity to distinguish the true from the false. Descartes reminded us of this, long after Socrates’ dialogue with the slave boy. But all do not have the same opportunity to exercise this capacity. We are still faced with this necessity: to give to each individual, everywhere, and as much as possible throughout life, the chance to make full use of his or her own freedom. Likewise, the imperative of ensuring that thought is subject to no religious or ideological censorship has an urgency that has not diminished with time.” (Droit, 1995, p. 27, original emphasis)
argue in this thesis is that, without positive recognition of what Young calls “social
difference,” HSP works to reinforce various forms of oppression. Young’s concept of
oppression helps to highlight what I find problematic with both the selective and the
universal approach to HSP. But let me first introduce these two approaches in detail.

The Selective Approach to High School Philosophy

Like the question of feasibility, the litany of obstacles facing High School
Philosophy is repeatedly stated in the literature, with minor variations. The 1958 APA,
for example, lists seven common obstacles against pre-college philosophy: (a) students’
intellectual immaturity; (b) student’s emotional immaturity; (c) parents’ interference;\(^53\)
(d) jealousy from other teachers;\(^54\) (e) overcrowding of the Curriculum; (f) lack of good
teachers; (g) impression that offering philosophy as part of other humanities course is
to High School Students?” presents a similar list of objections to High School
Philosophy, divided into practical (students’ lack of maturity, lack of certified instructors,
lack of room in the Curriculum) and theoretical (“philosophy makes no progress,” “it has
no practical value,” “it leads to skepticism and cynicism.”) (Link, 1976, pp. 164-165).
Similarly, in his “A Case for Philosophy in the American High School Curriculum,”
Francis Breslin considers five objections to HSP (Breslin, 1982, pp. 364-365):

1. Philosophy [is] unnecessary, since it is taught later in college.
2. Philosophy [is] irrelevant to or too advanced for high school seniors.
3. Philosophy is an educational frill.
4. High School already teaches critical thinking.
5. Philosophy is inadvisable to high school students – some of them might feel
   threatened.

\(^53\) “In high school situations, where the students may report to parents each night the latter may become
   disturbed by the critical material being used and attempt to interfere with the school program.”
\(^54\) “Other teachers will resent philosophy’s siphoning off the better students from their courses.”
In short, the objections to HSP could be summed up into the perception that students, teachers and schools are not ready.\textsuperscript{55} The first set of objections has to do with student readiness: adolescents may not be intellectually or emotionally ready for philosophy; they may not be interested; they may even be downright reluctant. The claim that adolescents are not ready (intellectually or emotionally) for philosophy might mean either that adolescents have not yet reached the point in their psychological development to be able to engage in philosophical thought or that they have not yet received sufficient training to do so. In other words, the claim might be either that adolescents are not old enough or not educated enough.

One common response to the objection that adolescents are not intellectually mature enough for philosophy is to grant that this might be true of some adolescents but not all of them.\textsuperscript{56} This was the approach taken by the 1958 APA:

\begin{quote}
It is true that some may be [intellectually immature]; but many are at least as mature as the college freshman; and psychological tests suggest that mental growth is substantially complete by the time students reach the high school age. Perhaps philosophy should be offered selectively in high schools. (APA, 1958, in Moore, 1967b, p. 217)
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[55]{Reinert puts it thus: “Previous reluctance to offer a pure philosophy course in high school probably has stemmed partially from a failure to realize that the students have not learned to grapple with ideas. (…) Undoubtedly many school boards and administrators also feel that such an abstract study is impractical, which would be a powerful consideration in a society oriented toward training rather than educating its young. In addition, if the administration were interested in establishing such a course, trained personnel often have not been available.” (Reinert, 1967, p. 236)}
\footnotetext[56]{This is in sharp contrast with the universalizing argument often made in the P4C literature that all children can/should do philosophy: “All children have a propensity for philosophical thinking, for asking probing questions and experimenting with ideas and possible solutions. Some children, like some adults, find philosophizing easier than others, but since [Philosophical Intelligence] is a capacity all of us possess, those who find it harder can still be helped to think philosophically, to broach problems in more systematic and logical ways.” (Fisher, 2008, p. 101)}
\footnotetext[57]{Hicks and Holland (1989) take a similar route: [O]bviously this cannot be widely generalized, since many – though certainly not most – high school students are philosophical (i.e., they think about philosophical problems) and do show the intellectual strength necessary for a successful introduction to the discipline. (Hicks & Holland, 1989, p. 115)}
\end{footnotes}
“Selective” is the keyword in the 1958 APA’s approach mentioned in the passage above. While the APA did not at that point elaborate on how such selection is to take place, a compromise that is often suggested is that philosophy be offered only to senior students (Garrett, 1967, p. 244), or that it be offered as a summer course (Hicks & Holland, 1989).

Even if adolescents are ready for philosophy and there are sufficient (and sufficiently) qualified teachers to teach it in high school, there is also the objection that there is no space in the Curriculum for it. As Reber puts it: “We cannot afford to add any new subjects to a Curriculum that is already taxing our budgets.” (Reber, 1971, p. 50) On this topic, the 1958 APA was firm: “This is a weighty objection for anyone who assumes philosophy to be a “fancy” or “fringe area” course, which we do not.”58 (Moore, 1967b, p. 218). This type of response invites a consideration of whether philosophy is a priority or simply a “fancy fringe.” To meet this type of difficulty, a number of alternatives for philosophy education in the secondary level have been offered, such as philosophy clubs after school (Reinert, 1967; Benjamin, 1990), semester-long elective for seniors (Hicks & Holland, 1989), summer courses (Hicks & Holland, 1989) or that philosophy be offered as part of other subjects in the Humanities (Glass & Miller, 1967; Hicks & Holland, 1989).

As the 1958 APA anticipates, many of these alternatives to HSP seem not fully convinced of the feasibility and/or desirability of HSP as official part of the Curriculum. The most illustrative example of this is Hicks and Holland’s “Teaching Philosophy to High School Students: Indiana University’s Summer Philosophy Institute” (Hicks & Holland, 1990). The purpose of this article is to defend the option of intensive week-long

58 “It should not, however, replace basic courses such as reading; but there may be courses in the Curriculum which philosophy could replace with a net gain for the student.” (Moore, 1967b, p. 218)
philosophy courses for high school students, such as the one the authors have offered at the University of Indiana every summer since 1980. In their view, this alternative is better than all the other ones they list. The main advantage of a summer course in Hicks and Holland’s view seems to be that it attracts “better” students. According to them, the “high caliber of participants.” means that “no exams or evaluations are needed to maintain interest” and that “a lot of ground can be covered in one week.” (Hicks & Holland, 1989) They admit that offering philosophy as a semester-long elective is better in this regard than having it taught with other humanities courses, because it means that “chances are better of getting intellectually prepared students,” whereas the fact that it is an elective means that “chances of attracting interested and motivated students are good.” If philosophy is offered as a mandatory component in other subjects, however, there is the risk that “[t]here will be a mix of interested and uninterested students.” “Not many of the students will be ready for [philosophy]; for them it may be a waste of time and effort.” (Hicks & Holland, 1989, p. 115)

In my opinion, this approach furthers oppression in four main ways. The first way this approach furthers oppression is by plain exclusion. The number of adolescents that get access to philosophy is relatively small and quite privileged. These are senior students, who are not only in the final year, but who have succeeded academically; they are university-bound, and in some cases, they are considered gifted, that is, intellectually

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59 About this option, the 1958 APA states: “Teachers in standard subjects who have some competence in philosophy could profitably handle their subjects in terms of philosophical considerations; but this type of approach, however helpful in teaching the standard subject, is no substitute for a direct, systematic attack on the great questions. (1958 APA, in Moore, 1967b, p. 218) As recently as 2007, the UNESCO made the following remark on this option: “there is a dichotomy between philosophy’s presence as a taught subject and the inclusion of philosophical concepts or ideas across other subjects. It is almost customary for reform movements aiming to reduce classroom hours in philosophy to claim inspiration from the philosophical nature of other existing or proposed subjects – most often classes in ethics, civics or religious education. Conversely, it happens just as often that other subjects allied with more political or sectarian doctrines are levered into place in the name of philosophy.” (UNESCO, 2007, p. 49)
superior to the “average” student (English & Foster, 1996; Garland, 1998). One way therefore that this approach is oppressive is that it is exclusive: it only provides for a very small group of people, those considered “intellectually superior.” It makes no provision for those who do not belong to this select group: those who have not yet shown – and may never show – high academic performance.

Garland’s doctoral dissertation (1998), for instance, studies at length the benefits of introducing gifted high school students to philosophy. Although finding fault with Lipman for focusing on younger children and not adolescents (Garland, 1998, p. 91) Garland’s argument too is unsatisfactory in that she makes a case for how philosophy can be beneficial to gifted adolescents, but spends little time arguing whether it is beneficial to adolescents in general. The operative word in her analysis is “gifted,” and it often reads as if philosophy were more beneficial to the “gifted” than to the “average” student, as opposed to being beneficial to both in different ways.

One may argue that this approach only rewards those with higher merit, those who have succeeded in the system. But as Young argues in chapter 7 of Justice and the Politics of Difference (Young, 1990, pp. 210ff), academic merit is a questionable standard for a number of reasons:

In principle this hierarchy and system of domination is little different from the traditional status hierarchies that application of a merit principle was supposed to eliminate. A class of powerful people establishes normative criteria, some of which have the function of affirming its own power and reinforcing the organizational system that makes it possible. To occupy positions within the hierarchy they choose persons who have certain status credentials (instead of coming from the “right family, they went to the “right” school), and persons who by nature or training exhibit the preferred behavioral and temperamental characteristics. (Young, 1990, p. 212)
This is not unlike the way in which in Plato’s *Republic* citizens are divided according to the nature of their soul, as explained and justified by the “myth of the metals” (414c ff). According to this story, different people have different metals in their soul: gold, silver or bronze. Those with golden souls are selected for the ruler class, the silver-souled for the soldier class, and the bronze-souled are destined for the artisan class. One might object that the fact that in the *Republic* the people responsible for the sorting are themselves “gold-souled” people whose job is to choose people that resemble themselves puts in question the neutrality of the system. Moreover, the fact that these are also the people responsible for preaching the “noble lie” does not help the ideal of neutrality either. But one could still argue that although this might put into question the neutrality of the educational system in Plato’s *Republic*, it does not taint the ideal itself: if only Plato could find more objective ways for doing this selection, this system would be perfectly fair.

The reason I bring this up is that I believe that the myth of the metals is not an old idle story. Not only is it alive and well, but also extremely harmful. To see that it is alive and well, we only need to look at the ideal of neutrality, which appears to me to be a 21st century version of the same myth. I believe that both the myth of metals and its contemporary descendants are harmful, for two reasons. First, I reject the belief that there can be objective measures for separating the “naturally academic” from the “naturally non-academic.” Second, even to strive towards such an objective measuring is harmful, since this very division into “natures” is a flawed argument to justify a view of “equal opportunity” that not only fails to ensure equity, but actually works as an obstacle to it.

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60 As Plato himself calls the myth used to justify this division. Note the aristocratic nature of the term: the fact that the lie is “noble” supposedly makes it acceptable, and even beneficial.
A second way in which the selective approach is oppressive is thus that it privileges some students over others. From my theoretical perspective, to think that so-called gifted adolescents are fitter for philosophy education than the “average student” or the “non-academic student” is a catch-22: it is to reward students that have already been rewarded by the system. This only works to reinforce the gap between those who have been considered fit for a “liberal education” from those fit for “vocational training.” In other words, this selective offering of philosophy at high schools reinforces what Bertrand Russell (1916/1961) calls “education as superiority over others”⁶¹ and what Jane Roland Martin (1985/2001) calls the dichotomy between “bodiless minds” and “mindless bodies:” those who think but do not need to act and those who act but do not need to think.⁶²

While I think it is important to see gifted students as a group with specificities of its own, PoM educators must resist the tendency – typical of the selective approach – to think of gifted students as better or more fitted for philosophy education than other students. On the contrary, if one is to take pre- and post- cognitive testing as any indication of “philosophical response,” one could argue that philosophy has much more impact on those students considered “non-academic” than on those considered “gifted.”

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⁶¹ “The examination system, and the fact that the instruction is treated mainly as training for a livelihood, leads the young to regard knowledge from a purely utilitarian point of view, as the road to money, not as the gateway to wisdom. This would not matter so much if it affected only those who have no genuine intellectual interests. But unfortunately it affects most those whose intellectual interests are strongest, since it is upon them that the pressure of examinations falls with most severity. To them most, but to all in some degree, education appears as a means of acquiring superiority over others; it is infected through and through with ruthlessness and glorification of social inequality.” (Russell, 1916/1961, p. 410, my emphasis)

⁶² “The underside of a liberal education devoted to the development of ‘disembodied minds’ is a vocational education the business of which is the production of ‘mindless bodies.’ In Plato’s Just State, where, because of their rational powers, the specially educated few will rule the many, a young man’s image of himself as ‘only a body doing a job’ is the desired one. That the educational theory and practice of a democracy derives from Plato’s explicitly undemocratic philosophical vision is disturbing. We are not supposed to have two classes of people, those who think and those who do not. We are not supposed to have two kinds of people, those who rule and those who obey.” (Martin, 1985/2001, p. 72)
Working with underprivileged High School Students in Hawaii, Christine Gehrett found that although her class was far from being considered “academically gifted,” pre- and post-testing using the Cornell Critical Thinking Test showed an average gain of 6.7% (from 43.9% to 50.6, with some students increasing as much as 21%, from 40 to 61%) as a result of her philosophy program. This is a remarkable increase, especially if compared to the results of gifted students. In their “Philosophy courses for gifted high school students” (1996), for instance, English and Foster report the result of applying the Watson-Glaser’s critical thinking test to compare the gifted high schools students in the program with the “average” college freshmen in the Introduction to Philosophy course. The results show that the gifted high school students score high in the pre-tests (around 90%) but do not improve much in the post-test (about 0 to 5% – there is not really much room for improvement). Average freshmen, however, score much lower on the pre-test (around 40-50%) but make significant progress by the time of the post-test (around 20% – still scoring lower than the gifted students, however). All this evidence helps to dispel the fear that philosophy has more to offer to “gifted” students than to those considered less gifted.

So far I have considered two ways in which this selective approach to HSP is oppressive: it excludes many and it privileges some over others. A third way in which this approach can be seen as reinforcing oppression involves the harms it does even to the few who are privileged. In a way, even this select group of students suffer what Young calls cultural imperialism in the sense that these students are not valued *qua* adolescents, but for being “almost as good as university students.”63 Their adolescence seems to be a

63 “Our experiment has included some work with juniors as well as seniors, and we are convinced that school-age philosophy should not go below the senior level. Surely some juniors will do as well as some
negative trait to be compensated or transcended. Many of the obstacles facing HSP can, in my view, be traced to a widespread valuing of college instruction over secondary instruction. It is hard to keep both teachers and students motivated, for example, if teaching HSP continues to be seen as second best to teaching college level students.\textsuperscript{64} This may lead teachers to treat HS students either as defective versions of college students, or just like college students. But both attitudes fail to see adolescents for what they are: they both expect high school students to conform to what they are not.\textsuperscript{65}

Often in the HSP literature one finds less than flattering descriptions of the specificities of adolescence. Consider the following example from the 2007 UNESCO study:

Adolescents seem called to question their situations almost despite themselves, often becoming argumentative in order to affirm and reassure themselves (…). How then do we encourage students whose self-awareness is fraught with emotion to rationally question their own identities as individuals with the freedom of thought? (…) How do we cultivate a questioning spirit in those who, unsure of themselves, desperately seek certainties, often turning those very certainties on their head in acts of defiance? What pedagogical and didactic approach can teachers use to help adolescents move from the matters that continually preoccupy their thoughts to questioning their own identity: from an emotional to a rational response to the world about them? (p. 67)\textsuperscript{66}

\textsuperscript{64}“[Adolescents] are not likely to go for philosophy as an elective, except for particular students – a small minority who are disposed that way. Most of the courses they get taught are taught by specialists, many of whom wish they were teaching at the college level and who tend not to use didactic methods. And the kids react to that.” (Lipman, in Gregory, 2000, pp. 62-63)

\textsuperscript{65}“If philosophy should be introduced to pre-college curricula, philosophers should avoid assuming that their own motivations in pursuing philosophical inquiry are the sort of motivations likely to be found among pre-college students. (…) Philosophy should be tailored to the needs and capacities of the students and not programmed from above by professional philosophers.” (1973 Precollege conference, 1993, p. 38)

\textsuperscript{66}“Whereas psychology takes a cathartic approach to the verbal expression of emotions, philosophy looks to language to work through conceptual ideas, which can also be cathartic for the adolescent in the way that
In a way, this approach sees the adolescent as the Other. This negative opinion of adolescents often gets incorporated by the adolescents themselves and they start to see their adolescence as something negative from which to distance themselves. It also impacts their view of other adolescents, in a process that Young describes as “aversion” (Young, 1994, chap. 6). Aversion reinforces a sense of alienation, from both themselves and from their peers, in that it urges them to distance themselves from their social and physical reality as they try to insert themselves in the dominant, that is, in the adult world.

The selective approach to HSP thus follows a pattern where a previously excluded group becomes formally included, but its typical attributes continue to be devalued. Thus, these groups are to accept the attributes of the dominant group, such as dispassionate, disembodied rationality. The problem with this approach is that it fails to take into account the positive attributes of the oppressed group. It also fails to see the heterogeneity within the oppressed group. This is a fourth way in which the selective approach to HSP reinforces alienation from self and others.  

Jane Roland Martin presents this argument extremely well, in a series of works in search for a new ideal for the educated person. Starting with a critique of Paul Hirst’s theory of “Forms of Knowledge” (1981), then R. S. Peters’ ideal of the “educated man”

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67 “The privileging of allegedly dispassionate speech styles (…) often correlates with other differences of social privilege. The speech culture of white, middle-class men tends to be more controlled, without significant gesture and expression or emotion. The speech culture of women, racialized or ethnicized minorities, and working-class people, on the other hand, often is, or is perceived to be, more excited and embodied, values more the expression of emotion, uses figurative language, modulates tones of voice, and gestures widely.” (Young, 2002, pp. 39-40)
(1982), Martin expands her arguments over the years, reaching out to the origins of this ideal (going as far back as Plato) and to its effects (the harms that a masculine ideal of education does both women and men) (1985/2001 and 1985). In her “Becoming Educated: A Journey of Alienation or Integration?” (1985/2001), Martin’s main aim is to show how the traditional Western ideal of the educated person embodies the divorces of mind-body, reason-emotion, self-other that John Dewey fought throughout his life (Martin, 1985/2001, p. 70). Martin uses as illustration the story of Richard Rodriguez, a typical academic who cultivated mind, reason and self in detriment of body, emotion and others. After a careful analysis, Martin concludes that “upon completion of his educational journey, Rodriguez bears a remarkable resemblance to the guardians of the Just State that Plato constructs in the Republic” (Martin, 1985/2001, p. 71):

> It is not surprising that Rodriguez acquires habits of quiet reflection rather than noisy activity, reasoned deliberation rather than spontaneous reaction, dispassionate inquiry rather than emotional response, abstract analytic theorizing rather than concrete story telling. They are integral to the ideal of the educated person that has come down to us from Plato. (Martin, 1985/2001, p. 70)

Only a few people, however, can afford the luxury of embodying the stereotype of the absent-minded academic with head in the clouds and completely out of touch with

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68 Thus, Martin’s description of Rodriguez fits, for instance, Young’s analysis of the 19th century ideal of beauty as “an ideal of manly virtue, of the strong, self-controlled rational man distanced from sexuality, emotion, and all else disorderly and disturbing.” (Young, 1990, p. 128)

Cf. Hartsock: “[T]he male experience is characterized by the duality of concrete versus abstract. Material reality as experienced by the boy in the family provides no model, and is unimportant in the attainment of masculinity. Nothing of value to the boy occurs with the family, and masculinity becomes an abstract ideal to be achieved over the opposition of daily life. Masculinity must be attained by means of opposition to the concrete world of daily life, by escaping from contact with the female world of the household into the masculine world of public life. This experience of two worlds, one valuable, if abstract and deeply unattainable, the other useless and demeaning, if concrete and necessary, lies at the heart of a series of dualisms – abstract/concrete, mind/body, culture/nature, ideal/real, stasis/change. And these dualisms are overlaid by gender: only the first of each pair is associated with the male.” (Hartsock, 1983/1998, pp. 118-119)
One can only be “out of touch with reality” when this reality affords a minimum degree of infra-structure for one to have the comfort not to worry about it. The harms associated with traditional dichotomous thinking, therefore, affect not only individuals, but society as a whole. To the extent that HSP reinforces this type of alienating thinking it also reinforces oppression.

These are four ways in which a selective offer of HSP furthers oppression: 1) it provides for a small group of adolescents – and an already privileged group of adolescents at that; 2) it reinforces the view of education as superiority over others by widening the liberal-vocational education divide; and finally, it furthers alienation – both 3) towards oneself and 4) towards one’s peers. This is not to say, however, that to expand philosophy teaching indiscriminately to all HS students automatically resolves these

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69 Naomi Scheman labels the position of unconcern with social issues and the deliberate lack of social involvement “privileged marginality”: one that is privileged precisely for being marginal, as is typically the case of the academic and especially of the philosopher (Scheman, 1996, p. 390).

70 As bell hooks says about the academic’s typical lack of concern for physical appearance, which can be extended to all of one’s physical reality: “The person who is most powerful has the privilege of denying their body. I remember as an undergraduate I had white male professors who wore the same tweed jacket and rumpled shirt or something, but we all knew that we had to pretend. You would never comment on his dress, because to do so would be a sign of your own intellectual lack. The point was we should all respect that he’s there to be a mind and not a body.” (hooks, 1984, p. 137). Cf. Young 1990, esp. p. 112 and 126.

71 As Martin says: “Do the separations bequeathed to us by Plato matter? The great irony of the liberal education that comes down from Plato and still today is mark of an educated person is that it is neither tolerant nor generous. As Richard Rodriguez discovered, there is no place in it for education for the body, and since most action involves bodily movements, this means there is little room in it for education of action. Nor is there room for education of other-regarding feelings and emotions. The liberally educated person will be provided with knowledge about others, but will not be taught to care about their welfare nor to act kindly toward them. That person will be given some understanding of society, but will not be taught to feel its injustices or even to be concerned over its fate. The liberally educated person will be an ivory tower person – one who can reason but who has no desire to solve real problems in the real world – or else a technical person who likes to solve real problems but does not care about the solutions’ consequences for real people and for the earth itself.” (Martin, 1985/2001, p. 71)

Cf. Hartsock: “The compartmentalization or fragmentation of life is a second corollary of possessive individualism. The system of purchasing labor by the day or hour rather than by lifetimes of loyalty is compatible with the idea that in different spheres one behaves according to different rules. An important separation in industrial society has been between modes of behaviour appropriate for the family and behaviour appropriate for the workplace or public life. The women’s movement has been particularly concerned with the separation of the personal from the political, but this distinction is simply one of many compartmentalizations that divide the world into disparate spheres: the public is separated from the private; professional judgments from human ones; the world of facts (reason) from that of values (emotion).” (Hartsock, 1981/1998, p. 27)
issues. In the next section, I show how some of the problems I detected in the selective approach are also part of the universal approach to HSP.
The Universal Approach to High School Philosophy

A second approach that became increasingly more current in the 1970’s with the emergence of the “Philosophy for Children” initiative (P4C) was the view that everyone can and should do philosophy. Thus we have the notion of “Philosophy for All”, proposed by various authors (cf. Hand & Winstanley, 2008), by UNESCO72 and more recently by jurisdictions such as Brazil, where philosophy is mandatory to all HS students during the three years of their secondary schooling. Unlike the selective approach, where objections to pre-college philosophy were considered in terms of adolescents – and adolescents were considered negatively compared to college students – in the universal approach those objections are not considered anymore, or when the are, they refer not to adolescents, but rather to younger children. The assumption seems to have been either that those objections had been dealt with, that they do not hold for adolescents, or that, to the extent that the objections to philosophy with children are addressed, these counter-objections automatically translate to adolescents. It is almost as if philosophy started to be considered as an unalloyed good.73 In this section I argue that this approach too can be

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72 “Institutionalization of P4C is an extremely interesting proposition, and some countries are already well on the way towards achieving this. One great advantage of obligatory primary schooling is that it provides all children with a place where they can ask the questions that are important to them – where they can experience at an early age the spirit of philosophy; acquire a taste for rational analysis, driven by a thirst for truth; and develop the critical tools they will need as individuals to better understand and navigate though life, and as citizens to contribute to public debate, support democracy and resist misleading propaganda. Rather than leave P4C to the resourcefulness and enterprise of local initiatives, which can deprive a great number of children of a very meaningful learning experience, generalizing these practices would contribute to establishing a common culture of critical and creative thinking.” (UNESCO, 2007, p. 14, my emphasis)

73 “The modern culture has relegated ideas to a secondary status in personal development. There has been a ‘metaphysical repression’ with far more dangerous consequences than the sexual repression identified by modern psychology. Philosophy must be brought to young people; the sense of wonder is the real seed of moral behavior.” (Needleman, 1982, abstract)

“Learning to think logically is an important part of the child’s, and the teenager’s, personal development. In experiencing what it is to be a thinking being, they become aware of their common humanity. Through rational discussions they also experience stating their opinions out loud, in front of the group – having their ideas listened to and defending them. Such experiences can strengthen their self-esteem. By engaging in
oppressive: that is, it too excludes some, privileges others and alienates all, although in a slightly different ways than the selective approach. Let me address each of these claims at a time.

*Who is “everyone”?*

Although the universal approach might seem less exclusive than the selective approach, it still is excludes groups of adolescents, while making them invisible. One may argue that this is too much of an exaggeration, that in fact, the purpose of programs such as UNESCO’s “Philosophy for All,” or the Brazilian initiative is precisely to make sure that no student is denied the chance to develop their philosophical potential. But the question here is: Who is everyone? A one-size fits all approach is precisely what prevents “all” from being equally included. Let me illustrate this point with an analogy.

During the Brazilian presidential campaign in 2006, one of the candidates, Senator Cristovam Buarque, gave a speech that made a strong impression on me. Buarque had been Minister of Education and Dean of the University of Brasilia, and his motto for the campaign was the need to invest in public elementary education throughout the country. He compared education with soccer and asked the following question: why is it that Brazil is the country in the world with most awards in soccer, but has never received a single Nobel prize?

The gist of his answer was as follows. From the time they can walk, boys all over the country are highly encouraged to play soccer. Because Brazil has a large

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74 Even though Brazil’s women soccer team also ranks high, soccer is still not generally considered a women’s sport in Brazil.
population and most of the (male) child population spends hours daily playing soccer, the pool of highly trained candidates is very wide. And because most boys at one point or another in their lives dream of becoming professional soccer players, the large number of highly trained and driven candidates competing for relatively few professional positions means that to be successful, one must not only be a good player: one has to be extraordinary. The same, Buarque claimed, was not true of education. The percentage of Brazilian children aged 7 or older that are not in school is disconcerting. By the time they take university entrance exams, the pool of highly trained candidates is quite meager. But if more children had access to good quality of education, the competition amongst them would make the overall levels of accomplishment in the country significantly higher – maybe high enough to warrant a Nobel prize one day.

My question, however, is: does everyone have equal opportunity to excel (whatever “excel” means) in activities such as soccer or philosophy? To answer this question, not only must one first define what the word “excel” means in this context but also (and more pressingly) one must define what the word “everyone” means in this context. The analogy with soccer is interesting first because not everyone is able to play soccer: people with certain physical and/or mental disabilities are thus “naturally” excluded from this notion of “everyone.” Likewise, 9-day-old babies and 99-year-old citizens would most likely be excluded for age reasons: so they too do not count as “everyone” in this context. Then there are the gender assumptions: in many countries (Brazil included) soccer is considered a masculine sport, with the double-edge result

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75 Although not all of them, as I elaborate below.
76 Interestingly, on November 18, 2008, the Brazilian edition of Yahoo News reported that on that morning the German soccer idol Franz Beckenbauer mentioned in a speech that women’s soccer will never be as good as men’s [http://br.esportes.yahoo.com/18112008/40/esportes-beckenbauer-afirma-futebol-feminino-]
that girls who want to play are discouraged (and derided as too masculine if they insist) whereas boys who do not want to play are pressured into it (and derided as “effeminate” if they resist).

The problem with simply including everyone as if all were the same is that its notion of “everyone” is at the same time too broad and too narrow. It is too broad in the sense that it ends up including people who would, for whatever reason, be either unable or unwilling to participate. On the other hand, it is too narrow by failing to apply to people who would be both willing and able to participate, but whose participation would meet resistance, because it would challenge embedded social norms. Likewise, not only does a universal approach to HSP still exclude some people, such as those with learning disabilities, but it also perpetuates the idea that these people are “exceptions” and thus do not really count, or not even worthy of consideration. This is one way in which the “Philosophy for All” approach is still oppressive.

**Stereotypes in Action**

Earlier in this chapter, I argued that a second way in which the selective approach to HSP proves oppressive is that it furthers the gap between those who are “academic” from those who are not. This oppressive side-effect is also true of the universal approach, although in a subtler way. Although in theory everyone is given equal access to philosophy, such as in the Brazilian Curriculum, the argument could easily be made that

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77 alcancara.html, retrieved November 18, 2008. I was unable to find an article on this in English, even though they do report that Beckenbauer gave a speech on the opening of the Women’s U-20 World Cup in New Zealand this same morning. Because I have not been able to either see or read a transcript of the speech itself, I cannot say whether it was the Brazilian news that made up this headline, or whether it was the English speaking news that did not consider this point in the speech worth reporting. (I have also searched references to this speech in German and French, but the results were the same as the English searches.)

78 The film “Bend It Like Beckham” (2002) being a case in point.

that equal access does not always translate into equal opportunity to succeed.\textsuperscript{79}

Sometimes a social group might not be fully excluded from performing an activity, but because of stereotypes associated with the group and with the activity, they might be at disadvantage relative to other groups. This is true of soccer, for example, but it is not unique to it. Let us consider for a moment other activities, such as Latin, ballet or robotics. If I let my thoughts wander freely when I think of these pursuits, the first association that comes to mind relates to class: my first intuition is to label them as upper middle-class activities rather than, say, working class. The second association relates to gender: even if Latin may nowadays be considered fairly co-ed,\textsuperscript{80} the thought of boys learning ballet and girls learning robotics still strikes people as unusual at the very least\textsuperscript{81} (by contrast, the thought of girls learning ballet and boys robotics does not usually seem to strike people as strange at all). A third association in my mind relates to culture: while I can picture robotics in an Asian classroom as easily as in a Western classroom, there is something about Latin and ballet that strikes me as definitely more Caucasian than Asian, African or anything else.

One may think there is nothing too serious in these associations: they are just me sitting at my computer typing the first things that come to my mind when I hear “robotics,” “ballet” and “Latin.” There is no rigorous thinking involved. As a matter of fact, there is actually hardly any thinking: these images come to my mind of their own

\textsuperscript{79} “Educators mistakenly believe they have produced equal educational opportunity when no one is barred from following a course of study because of race and gender, and when in principle all students follow the same curriculum and are measured according to the same standards.” (Young, 1990, p. 206)

\textsuperscript{80} A debatable point, but let us grant this for the sake of the argument.

\textsuperscript{81} I know of no boys who take ballet (which testifies for its still being a fairly uncommon pursuit for boys). On the other hand, my 11-year old goddaughter has started to take robotics out of her own interest, and everyone to whom I mention this finds it strange (for the record, she’s very good at robotics: her team was the only one under 15 years-old in a national pre-College competition in Brazil. She also happens to be very good at dancing, although I am not sure it includes ballet.).
accord. This automaticity, however, is precisely what makes these associations so powerful. For example, I happen to be one of those people who actually make a deliberate effort to dispel these stereotypes. Nevertheless, no matter how much I try and how much I train myself to think otherwise, these biased associations still pop up in my head when I am distracted, in spite of myself.

Moreover, I doubt that I am the only person who makes these types of associations. A lot of people (not to say “most people”) do. I wonder, however, what percentage of people actually make any conscious effort to dispel these stereotypes. My point is that these associations are not just isolated random thoughts. On the contrary, they are both pervasive and immensely powerful. A boy who practices ballet is bound to have a harder time at it than a girl. His practicing encounters much more resistance, because it still challenges current norms of masculinity.82 A Portuguese girl studying Spanish will probably find it easier than her English friend does; a Chinese girl might have less motivation and parental support to study Latin than an Italian girl. This, however, has nothing to do with their innate capacity for athletics or language acquisition, but rather with the culture in which they were brought up. These examples show that equal access to a given activity does not always translate into equal opportunity for success.

New philosophy claims

Because pursuits such as soccer, ballet, robotics or Latin are not culturally neutral, if people from different genders, backgrounds, abilities or sexual orientations are to have equal opportunity to succeed in them, then mere equal opportunity of access is not going

82 The film “Billy Elliot” (2000) being a case in point.
to be sufficient. Different social groups need differentiated treatment that takes into account those attributes that may, for whatever reason, either facilitate or impair the acquisition of certain skills. Martin (1985/2001; 1985) presents a good illustration of this point. Although the focus of Martin’s argument is gender oppression (and an extremely convincing and illuminating one at that), many of her claims can be generalized to include other kinds of oppression, as I will argue below. Martin’s main point (1985/2001, 1985) is that the ideal of an educated person that goes back to Plato is extremely biased in favor of men. Moreover, even when women are allowed to take part in it (e.g., in Plato’s Republic), the fact remains that an education that is “genderized in favour of males” will yield different results if applied equally to women and men (Martin, 1985, p. 19). To think of ballet again, the fact that it is genderized “in favour” of females means that identical treatment will not yield identical results for boys and girls taking ballet.

The principle of equal treatment (prevalent in all levels of education and generally considered unproblematic) thus makes two questionable assumptions:

a) that everyone is equal (or at least “equal” enough); and

b) that treatment (in this case, education) is equal (that is, neutral).

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83 Martin’s argument which I summarize below was neither the first nor the most influential of its kind. It was, however, the first one I ever encountered, and it has forever shaped the way I look at issues of equal opportunity.


85 Martin calls this “The Identity Postulate:” if people have the same nature and are to perform the same role in society, they should receive the same education. (Martin, 1985, p. 18) “For the most part the education [Plato] prescribes for the guardian class and his Identity Postulate of same role, same education have been considered unproblematic. The guiding assumption has been that if women – or, rather, enough women – are allowed into the guardian class, sex equality will prevail.” (Martin, 1985, p. 18)
But when it comes to the education of women, there are at least three ways in which the treatment has not been equal:

1. Women have not always been allowed to receive a “liberal education”, 86

2. Even when they receive the same education as men (e.g. in Plato’s Republic and even today), the fact that this education is genderized in favour of males puts females in a double bind. On the one hand, if they do not receive such an education (or if they fail to do as well as their male peers), they are left behind and excluded from educated interaction (“girls can’t do math”). On the other hand, if they do receive this education and do well, they become masculinized, and are ridiculed and marginalized (“that girl is weird: she’s good at math!”). 87 It is a “damned if you do, damned if you don’t” situation. 88

3. An important aspect of this genderization is the fact that women’s accomplishments have generally been excluded from the academic canons. 89 This means not only that women’s accomplishments have historically not met with comparable recognition as those of men, but also that girls have too few role models with which they can identify. 90

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86 The term “liberal education” itself was subject much controversy, which I will not discuss here.

87 Cf. Rose: “Women who manage to get jobs in science have to handle a peculiar contradiction between the demands on them as caring laborers and as abstract mental laborers. Many resolve this by withdrawing or letting themselves be excluded from science; others become essentially honorary men, denying that being a woman creates any problems at all.” (Rose, 1983/2004, p. 75)

88 Martin sums it up: “So long as the guardian role is defined in terms of traits that are considered masculine, in Plato’s Just State potential female guardians would be in a no-win situation. They would have to acquire traits thought to be masculine in order to meet the requirements of the guardian role. Yet if they acquire those traits, they would very likely be viewed as abnormal and be derided or belittled for possessing them.” (1985, p. 34) Scholar Rosalind Franklyn is Martin’s favourite example of this double-edge disadvantage.

89 As Martin says: “Contemporary scholarship on women has shown that, by defining itself as the record of public and political events of the past – the very aspects of life from which women have for the most part been excluded – history effectively excludes women from its narratives.” (Martin, 1985, p. 25)

90 These same three points are made by various authors. Cf. Harding: “That oppressed groups are indeed capable of precisely the forms of rationality so highly valued by logicians, scientists, and in law of course
Items 2) and 3) go together, first because for the longest time all the qualities a woman could have were negative ones: silence, obedience. Thus, if the greatest quality a woman can have (point 2) is that of having no voice, then of course no woman will make into the canon (point 3). Moreover, if girls not only lack positive role models (point 3), but the few female models that they actually have are only spoken about to be derided (point 2), of course their learning environment is not as conducive to their learning as it is for their male peers, and thus equity of role occupancy (point 1) continues hard to achieve.\(^9\) There is no way therefore that such an education can be considered neutral as regards gender.\(^9\)

This three-fold argument, however, transcends the issue of sexism. It also describes other types of oppressive dynamics, such as those based on race, class, sexual orientation, age or physical/mental ability.\(^9\) For each of these oppressive interactions, one can apply Martin’s argument and say that:

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\(^9\) “In view of his own conditioning, we have little reason to believe that Plato would perceive sex stereotyping in the stories children are told. Yet an upbringing that through its literature portrays females as irrational, untrustworthy, and generally inferior to males will very likely have a differential effect on the self-confidence and the aspirations of girls and boys.” (Martin, 1985b, p. 24)

\(^9\) “When an identical education received by males and females consists of methods of teaching and learning that are male-based, equality of role occupancy is not assured. When the content of that education ‘validates men even as it invalidates women,’ this goal is further jeopardized. Moreover, supposing that an equal number of each sex graduates into Plato’s guardian class, so that there is equality of role opportunity; it cannot be assumed that women will be perceived or treated as the equals of men.” (Martin, 1985b, p. 23)

\(^9\) Although these issues are complicated by intersecting layers of oppression. See footnote 84 above.
1. The oppressed group has not always been allowed to receive a liberal education;

2. Even when they receive the same education as the dominant group, their typical attributes are devalued, putting them in a double bind: either they fail to do as well as their peers, or are ridiculed and marginalized for forfeiting their group identity, “trying to be what they are not.”

3. The accomplishments of oppressed groups have generally been absent from the academic canons.

We can see how Martin’s three points are present in the type of association with which I started this section. Going back once again to our ballet example, we can run this pattern through the gender variable and ask: 1) were both genders always allowed to learn ballet/robotics/Latin/philosophy? 2) Does ballet/robotics/Latin/philosophy typically emphasize characteristics of one gender more than of the other? 3) Does ballet/robotics/Latin/philosophy offer a number of past and present role models of both genders? The answer to these questions would help determine whether or not it would be fair (or even effective) to offer identical treatment to both genders. In other words, these questions help to isolate some of the necessary (though not sufficient) conditions for the treatment to be equitable – where equitable does not necessarily mean identical.

Following the same reasoning, we can then ask the same questions substituting “gender” with “race,” “class,” “sexual orientation,” “age” or “ability.” My point is that if

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94 “When participation is taken to imply assimilation the oppressed person is caught in an irresolvable dilemma: to participate means to accept and adopt an identity one is not, and to try to participate means to be reminded by oneself and others of the identity one is.” Young (1990, p. 165) Cf. also Freire’s concept of “cultural invasion” (1970/2000) and hooks on assimilation and invisibility (1990/2004).

95 “Even when they do not actively reinforce gender and racial stereotyping, schools generally do very little to confront cultural images of appropriate pursuits for girls and boys, or to make visible the achievements of women and people of color.” (Young, 1990, p. 206-7) See also Collins (1986/2004).
any Curriculum policy is to promote the equal rights of all its students, then these questions need to be asked about each of the items on the Curriculum. In particular, when we turn to the specific focus of this thesis, namely, the introduction of philosophy in the secondary school system, a careful analysis must include questions such as: to what extent is philosophy like ballet? Like robotics? Like Latin? 1) Were all genders/races/classes/etc, always allowed to learn philosophy? 2) Does philosophy typically emphasize characteristics of one gender/race/class, etc., more than the others? 3) Does philosophy offer a number of past and present role models of all genders/races/classes, etc.?

Because philosophy has historically been reserved to aristocratic European men, this stereotype is still very much present in the minds of students, teachers, teacher-trainers and the policy makers, and this influences students’ opportunities for success. An approach to HSP that fails to take into account social group difference will continue to privilege some groups over others by portraying the point of the view of the dominant class as universal. This is why rather than a “Philosophy for All,” what HSP needs is a “Philosophy of Many.” In chapter 5 I elaborate on what I mean by “Philosophy of Many” and how it addresses the difficulties I have highlighted in this chapter. But before I do this, let me first present and address a possible objection to my argument thus far.

**Possible counter-argument from UNESCO**

A first counter-objection to my argument, especially as concerns the importance of trying to escape the self-centeredness of Western philosophy, could come from Roger Droit, author of *Philosophy and Democracy in the World*, published by UNESCO in 1994. Making repeated appeals to the statements made in UNESCO’s constitution, Droit
strongly emphasizes the need for studying different philosophical traditions, a need already detected in the 1953 UNESCO report\(^{96}\) and reinforced by the 1995 Paris Declaration for Philosophy.\(^{97}\) Such a “planetary” approach,\(^{98}\) Droit acknowledges, is neither widespread nor easy to implement. In fact, in this comprehensive study, Droit detected a certain self-centredness and lack of openness in the teaching of philosophy around the world.\(^{99}\) He is extremely critical of the autocentrism he perceived in many of the responses to the UNESCO survey, especially as regards the Western perspective:

> This enclosure takes varied forms. First of all, philosophical education, according to the replies to the UNESCO questionnaire, is excessively centred on European thought and western culture. Rare are the countries where this teaching takes into account any books from other philosophical traditions. Almost everywhere in the world, the West dominates

\(^{96}\) “[The 1953 UNESCO survey prepared by Georges Canguilhem] observed that it was ‘useful to develop, in education, comparative study of different philosophical traditions. It is true that within each major tradition (western, Arab, etc.) the classic philosophers are generally studied without regard for national boundaries, but we should recognize the importance that a closer alliance would bring between the philosophical contributions of India, the Arab world, China and the West in teaching programmes that are too often limited to just one of these traditions. With such study of comparative philosophy students would be led to a more accurate and deeper appreciation of the importance of these diverse cultural realities, of their differences, their shared features, of the value of their conjunction.’ Nothing needs to be added to these lines, except the following: in this area, except for a few isolated initiatives, the situation has essentially not evolved.” (Droit, 1995, p. 137)

\(^{97}\) “Knowledge of philosophical insight in different cultures, comparison of what each has to offer, analyses of what brings them closer together and what separates them, should be pursued and supported by research and teaching institutions.” (UNESCO, 2005, Annex II)

\(^{98}\) “Why is [a planetary approach to philosophy] necessary? It is because only now is the world truly coming into existence. No doubt people have always named, in most languages, by the term ‘world’ or its equivalents, the organized totality of what is real. But until the twentieth century this totality was a postulate of thought rather than an everyday experience, since linking its far-flung parts to one another took considerable time. In reality, the links were extremely tenuous: it takes more than just ten travellers, or a hundred, or a thousand, to create real interdependence between continents and civilizations. As long as events did not have repercussions from one continent to another, what we today call ‘the world’ did not really exist.” (Droit, 1995, p. 28)

\(^{99}\) “Philosophy and its teaching, considered from a world perspective, seem to lack openness, as if there were a host of small self-centred groups existing beside one another, with no communication or interaction between them. Thus one fundamental mission of philosophy has still to be fulfilled at the world level: that of promoting reciprocal dialogue and discovery. Discovery not only of knowledge but of traditions. Dialogue between religious thinkers and between scientific schools.” (Droit, 1995, p. 136)
exclusively. This Eurocentrism must be overcome, and UNESCO has insisted on this point since its first endeavour. (Droit, 1995, p. 137)

As he distinguishes between philosophical approaches that are self-centred and those that seek their centre in others, Droit articulates what is, in my view, is the chief strength of this book: the critique of philosophical auto-centrism. This is how he spells out the difference between the two approaches:

On the one hand we have the diggers: the philosophers who seek roots, the native soil of thought, the original sites. On the other we have the nomads: the philosophers of voyage, of cosmopolitanism, of detours. On the one hand, we have philosophers who want ever greater purity for philosophy, seek to detach it from all that is not philosophy, want to make it more and more autonomous, to make it stand on its own foundations. On the other, we have philosophers who want to go beyond, unlock gates, lose their identity, open their thinking in all directions. (Droit, 1995, pp. 135-136)

At first sight, this concern for diversity and open-mindedness might seem a good basis upon which to argue for a democratization of philosophy. The problem, however, is that the only type of diversity which Droit considers is cultural diversity. Unfortunately, however, he says nothing about the self-centeredness of the male perspective, for instance (or White, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied, etc). Feminism, anti-racism, and other anti-oppression philosophical trends would be excellent examples of the second type of philosophy, but unfortunately they never get mentioned. The only barriers that Droit acknowledges are cultural and disciplinary. While it is true that there are still numerous barriers between cultures and disciplines, there are also strong barriers between genders,
social classes, sexual orientations, physical and mental abilities – sometimes stronger for being often invisible, or at least not to be named. We need border-crossers between all these centers and margins. And as Young puts it, this is not an issue of diversity for diversity’s own sake: it is actually a question of justice.103

Granted, along with questions such as “Does the general public understand that a knowledge of philosophy classics forming part of the world heritage makes an important contribution to understanding between cultures?” (Question 25), the UNESCO survey does include questions such as “Is philosophy education confined to a small number of people?” (Question 50b), “Is philosophy education provided on exactly the same basis to both men and women?” (Question 50c) and “What is the proportion of women among philosophy students?” (Question 19d). But not much is made of the answers to these questions in Droit’s analysis.

As a result, this report’s treatment of diversity, well-intentioned as it is, cannot account for or respond to disparities such as the following:

In his 1986 statistical profile of the American Philosophical Association (APA) membership, compiled from responses on renewal notices, David Hoekema reports that of the 2961 philosophers who responded (a 48 percent response rate), only 35 identified themselves as black. He emphasizes that a substantial number of people (719) failed to answer the question on minority status, but the lowness of the figure seems significant nonetheless. Of those 35, only 3 were women. (…) Similarly, an APA survey on member departments yielded the information that in 1985 blacks earned only 1 percent of the PhDs in philosophy, by

103 “Where there are problems of lack of recognition of national, cultural, religious, or linguistic groups, these are usually tied to questions of control over resources, exclusion from benefits of political influence or economic participation, strategic power, or segregation from opportunities. A politics of recognition, that is, usually is part of or a means to claims for political and social inclusion or an end to structural inequalities that disadvantage them. (…) The primary claims of justice (…) refer to experiences of structural inequality more than cultural difference.” (Young, 2002, p. 105)
comparison with a 3.3 percent rate for PhD’s generally. (Mills, 1998, p. 408, footnote 3)\textsuperscript{104}

UNESCO’s very constitution expresses a commitment to “give fresh impulse to popular education (...) by instituting collaboration among nations to advance the ideal of equality of educational opportunity without regard to race, sex or any distinctions, economic or social” (UNESCO’s Constitution, 16/11/1945, in Droit, 1995, p. 14). But this lack of regard and lack of distinction is itself symptomatic of the type of problem to which this thesis draws attention. Although the “no-distinction” approach may see itself as egalitarian and inclusive, it fails to account for structural barriers that may prevent genuine equality of access to differently located people, such as women, ethnic minorities or those excluded by virtue of their class, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability.\textsuperscript{105}

Droit does make the point that racism is unacceptable and must be fought,\textsuperscript{106} but he does not say how.\textsuperscript{107} Nor does he say anything about sexism, homophobia or able-ism.

\textsuperscript{104}“Since this article was written [in 1988], the profile of blacks in the profession has improved significantly, as indicated by a number of books and anthologies published or forthcoming, the formal recognition of Africana Philosophy by the APA, the launching in 1991 of the APA Newsletter on Philosophy and the Black Experience, and the establishment of the Journal of Africana Philosophy. Obviously, however, since blacks constitute only about 1 percent of North American philosophers, a tremendous distance remains to be covered, both in numbers and in influence on the content of the discipline.” (Mills, 1998, p. 408, footnote 3)

“[Philosophy] should be regarded as an essential element in any liberal arts program. At present, however, philosophy is one of the weakest areas in black colleges. Few of the black colleges offer majors in this area. At present, there are only 25 known black Ph.D.’s in philosophy in the United States. Further, according to a recent American Philosophical Association study, there are only 100 blacks in philosophy graduate programs throughout the country. No black colleges offer a Ph.D. in philosophy, and in many cases undergraduate philosophy courses are being taught by persons with little or no training in philosophy.” (Axelson & Rates, in Bosley, 1975, p. 32)

\textsuperscript{105}As Young argues: “Inclusion ought not to mean simply the formal and abstract equality of all members of the polity as citizens. It means explicitly acknowledging social differentiations and divisions and encouraging differently situated groups to give voice to their needs, interests, and perspectives on the society in ways that meet conditions of reasonableness and publicity.” (Young, 2002, p. 120)

\textsuperscript{106}“What is unacceptable? Only one thing: the denial of freedom. Anyone who uses freedom to suppress or hinder the freedom of others is in contradiction with the very possibility of human coexistence. Philosophical education must therefore fight against racism and any attempt at the destruction of the unity of mankind.” (Droit, 1995, p. 174)

\textsuperscript{107}“As with any other complex social phenomenon, racism is sustained by a plurality of causes. Thus a past history of racist practices (like the response given to the black philosopher Broadus Butler in 1952 when he applied for a job at a “white” university? ‘Why don’t you go where you will be among your kind?’ …)
And although recognition is a necessary step in fighting discrimination, it is only a first step.¹⁰⁸ I do believe, however, that Droit’s treatment of autocentrism does lay good foundations for work in this direction, both at the theoretical and at the practical level:

It is clear that international and intercultural reflection is indispensable for an analysis of the obstacles remaining in this area [of autocentrism]. They cannot quickly be overcome. But it will not suffice merely to call for the exchange of ideas and the circulation of people. If barriers invisible but powerful, restrict philosophical education and block a true dialogue between cultures, we need to try to understand, patiently and methodically, their construction in order to propose concrete measures. The role of UNESCO can be crucial in this domain. (Droit, 1995, p. 143)

One of the main purposes of this thesis is to make visible some of the powerful barriers that restrict philosophical education, and operate not so much between countries and cultures, but within classrooms. Because, as Young argues, “one of the purposes of advocating inclusion is to allow transformation of the style and terms of public debate and thereby open the possibility for significant change in outcomes” (Young, 2002, p. 12). For example, UNESCO’s 2005 Intersectorial Strategy for philosophy lists as key issues the “[i]dentification of obstacles to dialogue, analysis of what constitutes dialogue in relation to other forms of communication, and searching for the epistemological foundations of dialogue.” (UNESCO, 2005, p. 3)¹⁰⁹ While this is a step in the right

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¹⁰⁸ As Young says: “To the degree that a society is in fact differentiated by structural relations of privilege and disadvantage, claims that everyone in the society has some common interests or a common good must be subject to deep scrutiny, and can only be validated by critical discussion that specifically attends to the differentiated social positions.” (Young, 2002, p. 109)

¹⁰⁹ To achieve this end, UNESCO proposes a series of activities, including:

- Philosophical reflections and dialogues on the central themes relevant to the priorities of UNESCO: dialogue among civilizations, education for all, bioethics, knowledge societies, cultural diversity, ethics of the environment, poverty, sustainable development, etc.;
direction, if UNESCO really wants significant change in outcome in the realm of philosophy education, it needs to pay attention to the various types of exclusion at work, so that, using what Young calls “a plurality of modes of communication” we may achieve “the wisest and most just political judgments for action.” (p. 12) In other words, UNESCO is examining diversity through a telescope, which in itself is not a bad thing. However, although the changes it seeks do have repercussions at the global level, they actually begin at the micro level.\textsuperscript{110} Thus, a microscope is needed in order to see what is happening at that level and what needs to change there.\textsuperscript{111}

The ideal that guides this thesis is the hope that, in the long term, philosophy education may help in the development of what Young calls “a heterogeneous public engaged in transforming institutions to make them more effective in solving shared problems justly.” (Young, 2002, p. 12) Admittedly, this is difficult to achieve, if not downright utopic. But as it is written in the UNESCO report:

This is a major task, and will take a long time, but the means exist to carry it out: new tools of communication already allow some to transmit texts and documents, questions and answers, without delay, from one point of

\begin{itemize}
  \item Philosophical reflections and dialogues on the central themes relative to the World Congress of Philosophy: Philosophy facing world problems, topics such as globalization and responsibility, equality, collective and individual action, identity and justice;
  \item Interregional Philosophical Dialogues: Launched in 2004, this programme aims at establishing philosophical dialogues among scholars of various regions of the world, e.g. the Arab world and Asia, Africa and Latin America, Africa and the Arab world, Western and Eastern Europe, etc… (UNESCO, 2005, pp. 3-4)
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{110} For interesting reflection on how concern for democracy and social justice require a reconsideration of what the scope of the polity should be, see: Young, 1990, concluding chapter; Young, 2002, chapters 5 and 6.

\textsuperscript{111} The participants in the International Study Days "Philosophy and Democracy in the World" made promising proposals in this direction, including:

#5: “Study of the detailed philosophy content of human rights teaching and compilation of anthologies of democratic thought”;
#6: “Review of the extension of philosophy teaching to secondary education, in association with the countries that have done this in recent years;
#10: “Study on sex and gender differences in philosophical thinking;”

But I have not yet found any of these studies.
the globe to another. (...) But the obstacle to be overcome is the compartmentalization of the mind. Our thinking is partitioned, our views fragmented. (...) [W]e need to open our minds, expose them to the unexpected. Philosophy can help us to do this, but for that it must not fall into the trap of auto-centrism, that is, of building fences that enclose it. (Droit, 1995, p. 136)

**Philosophy: A Means for Alienation or Integration?**

My argument so far showed two direct ways in which a “neutral approach” to philosophy reinforces oppression: by privileging some students over others (e.g. upper class over working class, white over non-white, boys over girls, etc) and by excluding some others (e.g. those with learning disabilities). But philosophy can also reinforce oppression in an indirect way, by reinforcing oppressive social norms (such as mind-body dichotomy and social atomism). This third form of oppression thus affects both those in the privileged group as well as those in non-privileged groups, in that Western philosophy traditionally encourages a type of thinking which is alienating and which privileges distancing oneself from one’s social and physical reality. This detachment both from oneself and from others is alienating no matter the class, the gender, the age of the student, but particularly so for adolescents, given the particular stage of development in which they find themselves.

It is attention to difference that breaks the circle of inequality so that it can slowly become a spiral upward toward more justice and more social and political equality.¹¹²

Because philosophy has historically been reserved to a privileged few, when those not

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¹¹² “Especially when there are structural relations of privilege and disadvantage, then, explicit inclusion and recognition of differentiated social positions provides experiential and critical resources for democratic communication that aims to promote justice. Inclusion of differentiated groups is important not only as a means of demonstrating equal respect and to ensure that all legitimate interests in the polity receive expression, though these are fundamental reasons for democratic inclusion. Inclusion has two additional functions. First, it motivates participants in political debate to transform their claims from mere expressions of self-regarding interest to appeals to justice. Secondly, it maximizes the social knowledge available to a democratic public, such that citizens are more likely to make just and wise decisions.” (Young, 2002, p. 115)
from that group start to do philosophy a) they are marked as different; b) they have more
difficulties to overcome; and c) they suffer an alienation from their own background,
pretending to be what they are not while being constantly reminded of what they are (a
feeling often referred to as “double consciousness”).

These therefore are my two replies to a possible argument that “Philosophy for
All” mitigates some of the objections I present to the problems of a universal approach to
HSP. First, philosophy often is conceived as a Western activity with a strong logocentric
emphasis. Second, students in secondary and even in primary school already bring issues
of structural difference to the classroom. If there is no attention to the issues of reason
over emotion, mind over body and to the structural differences students already bring to
the classroom, HSP may work to reinforce alienation from self and from others.
Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the second most recurring issue in high school philosophy, that of its desirability. I showed that there has been two main ways in which this issue has been treated. The first one considers in detail various possible objections against HSP, such students’ readiness and availability of resources. As a way to circumvent these objections or to minimize their possible harm, this approach for the most part recommended that philosophy be offered only selectively, to a small number students who have already shown a high level of academic proficiency. I showed that this selective approach is oppressive in at least three ways: it is highly exclusive, it widens the gap between liberal and vocational education and finally, it furthers a sense of alienation from themselves and others.

The second approach, which I called “universal,” became increasingly more popular with the advent of P4C and had as a postulate that “everyone can and should do philosophy.” Within this approach, the objections considered by the selective approach rarely come into consideration: it was as if philosophy were an unqualified good, and the more widespread its teaching were, the better. Here too I claimed that the same three ways in which HSP is oppressive in the selective approach are also at work in this “Philosophy for All” approach. First, this approach too excludes a number of people, since “everyone” does not really mean everyone. Secondly, this approach also furthers the liberal-vocational gap: because historically philosophy has been aristocratic, adolescents from an academic background will have an easier time that those who do not. Thus, because although in theory all have access to philosophy, not all have an equal chance to succeed. Finally, the “Philosophy for All” approach also furthers alienation
both from oneself and from others, by privileging a disembodied, independent, atomistic perspective. Since this perspective has historically been typical of upper-class European males, and although upper-class European and male students of philosophy too suffer from the harms of alienation, those from other groups suffer the further harms of so-called “double-consciousness.” I also examined how a proponent of UNESCO’s “Philosophy for All” program could respond to my objections. Although Droit significantly recognizes important barriers in philosophy education, he nevertheless does not pay attention to issues of structural difference. For this reason, he cannot appropriately address the issues of assimilation and oppression which I raised in this chapter. In the next chapter, I look into more detail at the philosophical framework guiding both the selective and the universal approaches to HSP, namely, the so-called “myth of neutrality.”
Chapter 4: The Myth of Neutrality and the Logic of Identity

In chapter 1, I presented what Iris Marion Young, following Adorno, calls the “Logic of Identity” (Young, 1990, p. 98). The main characteristics of the Logic of Identity are that it tends to conceptualize things in terms of substances, rather than relations and it sees difference as opposition, thus creating dichotomies. Two main manifestations of the Logic of Identity are positivism, that is, a tendency to see things as fixed and abstract entities and reductionism, that is, a tendency to reduce things into sameness (Young, 1990, p. 3).

In this chapter, I present one way in which the Logic of Identity appears in theories and practices of knowledge, that is, in epistemology and in education. In these realms, the Logic of Identity often appears in the guise of what I call the Myth of Neutrality, that is, the belief that education, epistemology and knowledge are or should be neutral. To the extent that Philosophy Education is concerned with both epistemology and education, this discussion on the myth of neutrality is extremely relevant to my argument.

To do so, I examine the works of two authors Robert L. Simon’s “Neutrality and the Academic Ethic” (1994), on university neutrality and two works on epistemology by Harvey Siegel, namely, “What Price Inclusion?” (1995) and “Epistemological Diversity and Education Research: Much Ado About Nothing Much?” (2006). While the works I examine in this chapter do not encompass all of mainstream theories of education and knowledge, or even all of their authors’ thought, they are sufficiently representative of how the Logic of Identity appears in educational theory. The analysis I present in this chapter is thus intended to be illustrative and not comprehensive.
I argue in this chapter that the Myth of Neutrality, as exemplified by both Simon and Siegel, is an instantiation of the Logic of Identity, with all its characteristics. In that it represents education, knowledge and epistemology as fixed and abstract, and sees one particular type of thought – namely, Western thought – as universal and neutral, the myth of neutrality engages in the type of positivism typical of the Logic of Identity. Likewise, the Myth of Neutrality engages in the type of reductionism identified by Young in its tendency to reduce things into unity and sameness – for instance, in acknowledging only one’s own particular view of knowledge or epistemology to be the only legitimate one.

Not only is multiplicity thus homogenized and assimilated into sameness, but whatever is not assimilated into this sameness is seen as inferior, deviant or simply not existing. Difference, in this view, is always conceptualized as opposition. This type of either/or thinking, which divides everything into pairs, such as mind/body, subject/object, theory/practice, male/female, black/white, is markedly Western, even though it insists in casting itself as universal truth. Even this insistence itself is an instantiation of the type of binary thinking that separates mind/body, subject/object, abstracting itself from physical reality – the positivism characteristic of the Logic of Identity.

The problem with the myth of neutrality is not only the reductionism and the positivism that mark it. Besides being homogenic, it is also hegemonic. That is, it is oppressive, in that it excludes some, privileges others and alienates all. It excludes some either explicitly, in what Young calls external exclusion, or implicitly, through reductionism and assimilation: that is, by removing all vestiges of difference, while casting the attributes of a particular group as neutral and universal. Assimilation is thus an element not only of exclusion but also of privilege, in that the view of a group is
preferred over that of others, while the views of others are characterized as inferior, deviant or non-existing. The flip-side of assimilation is aversion, that is, while the position of one group is preferred over the others, the view of the others are treated with aversion, frequently even by the members of the underprivileged groups themselves.

Finally, a third way in which the myth of neutrality is oppressive is that it is alienating. By favoring substance over relations and opposition over difference, the myth of neutrality leads to the type of separations represented by the binaries of self/others, ideal/actual, mind/body, subject/object, male/female, heterosexual/homosexual, white/black, poor/rich. This type of dichotomous thinking is alienating for all, though with particularly oppressive consequences for those underprivileged. In chapter 5, I show how an account of philosophy education that takes a Politics of Difference into account can help mitigate philosophy’s alienating potential. But first, let me elaborate on each of these characteristics of the myth of neutrality, and show how they are embodied in the writings of authors such as Simon and Siegel.

Robert L. Simon on Academic Neutrality

Recent educational theory has moved away from the traditional model for education that traces its lineage to Plato, which posits knowledge as an “ideal form,” detached from physical reality. In particular, feminist movements, civil rights movements, critical pedagogy, postmodernists and other groups have challenged what they call “the myth of neutrality,” claiming that this “neutrality” is in fact biased with respect to features such as gender, race, class and sexual orientation (cf. Young, 1990; Mills, 1998). bell hooks, for instance, claims that to assert that education is neutral goes beyond mere naïveté or positive thinking: she goes as far as calling such denial “lying”
Henry David Aiken calls the effort to depoliticize the academy “quixotic” (Aiken, 1994, p. 113) and accuses those who believe the academy to be neutral of being “either disingenuous and hence guilty of bad faith or else so self-deceived that they are incompetent and deserve to be removed from office” (Aiken, 1994, p. 117). For Robert Paul Wolf, the doctrine of neutrality “suffers from the worst disability which can afflict a norm: what it prescribes is not wrong; it’s impossible” (Wolff, 1994, p. 104). Thomas Kelly calls neutrality a myth, “both untenable and undesirable,” (Kelly, 2001, p. 222), a label also used by Paulo Freire, who takes it further:

> From the critical perspective, it is as impossible to deny the political nature of the educational process as to deny the educational character of the political act… In the educational process as well as in the political act, one of the fundamental questions is the clarity around in favour of whom and of what, and therefore, against whom and against what, we carry out education, and in favour of whom and of what, therefore against whom and against what we carry out the political activity. (Freire, 1982, p. 23) [my translation]

Despite all these claims and Bigelow and Peterson’s even stronger one that “striving for objectivity and neutrality is akin to worshipping false gods” (in Hess, 2004, p. 259-260), there are many who defend not only that education can be neutral, but that it already is, and should continue to be so. Robert L. Simon’s edited book *Neutrality and the Academic Ethic* (1994) is an interesting work to consider here, because besides its title feature, the volume also includes eighteen short articles by different authors on the

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113 “That lying takes the presumably innocent form of many white people (and even some black folks) suggesting that racism does not exist anymore, and that conditions of social equality are solidly in place that would enable any black person who works hard to achieve economic self-sufficiency. Forget about the fact that capitalism requires the existence of a mass underclass of surplus labor. Lying takes the form of mass media creating the myth that feminist movement has completely transformed society, so much so that the politics of patriarchal power have been inverted and that men, particularly white men, just like emasculated black men, have become the victims of dominating women. (…) Add to this the widely held assumption that blacks, other minorities, and white women are taking jobs from white men, and that people are poor and unemployed because they want to be, and it becomes most evident that part of our contemporary crisis is created by a lack of meaningful access to truth.” (hooks, 1994, p. 29.)
topic of academic neutrality. (Most of these articles, including the editor’s, defend neutrality, which makes for an ironically non-neutral selection.)

Simon starts his book with the following claim:

In discussing neutrality, the first reaction I get from audiences often is somewhat blunt and inflexible. ‘Neutrality – that’s impossible!’ is a typical response, particularly in recent years when notions such as “neutrality,” “objectivity” and “impartiality” are either under attack or being interpreted in new and controversial ways in many disciplines. In my view, it would be a great loss to our educational institutions if they had no alternative but to be partisans in the major political disputes of the day. Above all, I hope to show that examination of the issue of institutional neutrality of colleges and universities can improve how we carry out one of our most important missions as a society: the induction of each generation into the domain of reasoned discourse and critical inquiry. (Simon, 1994, p. xiii)

Later in this chapter I address Simon’s axiom that reasoned discourse and critical inquiry are some of “society’s most important missions,” as well as the claim that without neutrality, objectivity and impartiality, educational institutions have “no alternative but to be partisans in the major political disputes of the day.” But before I start analyzing each of these claims, I should first put on the table the main issues in dispute.

One of Simon’s refrains is that “ideals such as impartiality, concern for truth, honest evaluation of evidence, and objectivity have long been thought to be among the major values that should govern scholarship,” but are now “dismissed as at best unattainable and at worst ideological weapons that disguise the partisan interests of

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114 Cf. Siegel: “I can well understand the incredulity that this boldfaced appeal to neutrality will undoubtedly provoke.” (Siegel, 2006, p. 7)

115 “It is plausible to conclude, then, that critical neutrality is not simply desirable, but that it would normally be wrong for universities not to be institutionally critically neutral. By violating neutrality, they not only threaten the autonomy of their students and faculty, but also undermine the very framework that allows them to perform their most important function: the constant rational evaluation and transmission of our social, scientific, and cultural heritage.” (Simon, 1994, p. 38, my emphasis) An important point to consider is whose heritage precisely Simon is referring to, and who decided that its transmission is society’s most important function.
powerful social groups” (Simon, 1994, p. 4). Simon’s understanding of what rejection of neutrality entails is extremely simplistic: to reject the ideal of neutrality is, for him, to defend non-rational partisanship.

That Simon does not understand the critical issues involving the critique of neutrality is clear from the way in which he presents what seems to him the main objections:

[O]ne popular argument is that no university can be neutral because the principle that the university ought to be neutral itself expresses a value judgement. A second, closely related argument points out that a university by its very nature (or at least as conceived of by proponents of the traditional academic ethic) is committed to such values as knowledge, truth, and rational discourse. Therefore, the university cannot be neutral because it is committed to certain values rather than others. (Simon, 1994, p. 12)

Simon dismisses the critique of neutrality as a logical contradiction: a critique of neutrality cannot be justified because it rejects the very possibility of rational justification. In other words, a critique of neutrality undermines itself:

In a perspectivist analysis, what reason is there for those from other traditions or perspectives to accept the revisionists’ critique of the traditional curriculum? According to perspectivism, no universal or interperspectival reason can be provided that is normative for all of those who approach the curriculum in a multiperspectival society. (Simon, 1994, p. 76)

116 One of my favorite variations of this refrain is the following: “In the face of such skepticism about basic scholarly values, one might wonder what function colleges and universities should play in our society. Should their principal role be simply to train workers to fit into an increasingly complex and technical socioeconomic system? Should it be to instill radical doubts about the justice and fairness of that system? On the other hand, is there something still to be said for the more traditional idea of the university as a center of objective scholarship, the pursuit of truth, and transmission of great ideas?” (Simon, 1994, p. 4, my emphasis) Another variation: “In what follows, such questions will be approached by examination of one central element of the traditional academic ethic: namely, the thesis that colleges and universities should be politically neutral. (…) We can begin by considering the relationship of the thesis of neutrality to the ideal of the university as a refuge for objective scholarship and transmission and examination of the great intellectual achievements of the past.” (Simon, 1994, p. 7, my emphasis)

117 Cf. Harding: “Objectivists claim that objectivity requires the elimination of all social values and interests from the research process and the results of research. It is clear, however, that not all social values
A strawperson argument is thus set, which does not begin to touch the surface of the critique against neutrality. First of all, not every author who presents a perspectivist analysis is necessarily against neutrality, against reasoned discourse or in favour of relativism. Second, by casting the critique against neutrality solely in terms of reason, Simon misses what is for me (and for many critics of neutrality) the main point at stake, namely, social justice.

This can be clearly seen in his constant defence of and nostalgia for one single universal perspective that is “normative for all.” The paradigm of dominance and logic of sameness is so ingrained in Simon’s analysis that he does not realize that such perspective is normative for all only because it subjugates some. It is not a universal perspective: it is the perspective of one being taken as the perspective of all. This is precisely one of the manifestations of oppression (Young, 1990, p. 170).

118 “Rigorous argument, reasoned discourse, and critical inquiry are not the exclusive domains of traditionalism but are central to a variety of diverse nontraditional perspectives, including feminism. If a neutral university simply is one committed to critical inquiry, feminism and critical neutrality are not necessarily in conflict.” (Purdy, 1994, p. 257)

119 “Somehow it seems highly suspicious that it is at the precise moment when so many groups have been engaged in “nationalisms,” which involve redefinitions of the marginalized Others, that suspicions emerge about the nature of the subject,” about the possibilities for a general theory that can describe the world, about historical “progress.” Why is it that at the moment when so many of us who have been silenced begin to demand the right to name ourselves, to act as subjects rather than objects of history, just then the concept of subjecthood becomes problematic? Just when we are forming our own theories about the world, uncertainty emerges about whether the world can be theorized. Just as we are talking about the changes we want, ideas of progress and rationally organizing human society become dubious and suspicious.” (Hartsock, 1998, p. 210, my emphasis)

120 “It should be clear by now that a significant segment of the revolutionary camp denies relativism. Nor is it reasonable to construe revolutionary claims relativistically – quite the contrary, for the most part they assume both an objective empirical world that is best understood by using gender as a category of analysis and a moral world that can be made better by doing so.” (Purdy, 1994, p. 248) Cf. also Hartsock (1998), Harding (1993/2004; 2004), Jaggar (2004), Collins (1986/2004, esp. p. 104). More on the ideals of objectivity and rationality below.

The ideal of a multiperspectival society, to which this thesis subscribes, is not to get rid of the current dominant perspective to put another one in its place, but rather to get rid of the paradigm that there should be one and only one perspective dominant over the others. The idea is not to remove all elements of the traditional curriculum, but to include other voices as well. As hooks says about cultural diversity (which could be extended to other types of diversity as well):

Some folks think that everyone who supports cultural diversity wants to replace one dictatorship of knowing with another, changing one set way of thinking for another. This is perhaps the gravest misperception of cultural diversity. Even though there are those overly zealous among us who hope to replace one set of absolutes with another, simply changing content, this perspective does not accurately represent progressive visions of the way commitment to cultural diversity can constructively transform the academy. (hooks, 1994, p. 33)

Although Simon does make the important concession that adherence to neutrality might sometimes be “overridden by even weightier moral considerations” (Simon, 1994, p. 38 and chap. 4), he does not seem to realize that such limits are much more prevalent that he makes them seem. Consider for instance his distinction between neutrality in consequences and neutrality in reasons. According to Simon, a basketball referee, for example, is (or should be) neutral in the reasons for her decisions, though not necessarily in the consequences of those decisions (p. 13). In other words, neutrality should be a cause for the referee’s decisions, rather than its outcome. Decisions of this type are,

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122 “Discussions of some of the standard entries in the catalog of horrors are now appearing in the media. Consider for instance the oft-quoted ”Hey, hey, ho, ho. Western culture’s got to go” chant that was elicited by Jesse Jackson’s visit to Stanford at the height of the debate about the Western Civilization course. Bob Beyers, who directed the Stanford University News Service from 1961 to 1990, writes in the Chronicle of Higher Education that these accounts leave out Jesse Jackson’s response to the students: “The issue is not that we don’t want Western culture. We’re from the West. But,” he added, “other cultures also should be studied.” Beyers goes on to point out that “the chant was never repeated at Stanford.” Yet that ending is never included in the story.” (June 19, 1991, B2, in Purdy, footnote 41)
according to Simon, truly neutral, “not in the sense of being consequence free, but in the sense of being non-partisan” (p. 15).

Simon’s basketball analogy is inappropriate for two reasons: in the normative sense of how things should be as well as in the descriptive sense of how things are. His description portrays the role of education as that of a neutral referee in a game where both teams compete in fair conditions. Assuming that this is the case, he claims that to defend anything other than what he calls critical neutrality (neutrality in reasons, not in consequences) is fallacious: “[t]he fallacy involved in the assertion that you either are with us or against us is that it can be said by either side.” (Simon, 1994, p. 15)

However, to accurately describe the role education actually plays in our society, the analogy would have to portray a referee who unjustly favours one team (for instance, by overlooking the fouls committed by the one side while penalizing the other for infractions of similar or lighter nature). In a game where one of the teams is having unfair advantages, not to side with the weaker one is in effect to help the stronger one. As Freire says:

To wash one’s hands before the relations between the powerful and those without power just because it has been said that “all are equal before the law” is to reinforce the power of the powerful. (Freire, 2000, p. 48, my translation; cf. Wolff, 1994, p. 105)

Simon’s basketball analogy is also inappropriate in a normative sense. It is part of the definition of basketball that it be competitive. The goal of each group is to defeat the other, a goal that is sanctioned by the rules of the game and enforced by the referee. Education, however, should not be a matter of competition and defeat, but of cooperation. If asked to choose between the two types of neutrality presented by Simon, proponents of affirmative action would pick consequential neutrality, not neutrality in reasons (which
he also calls “critical neutrality” as if the other were not also critical). To use the basketball analogy, the goal of affirmative action advocates is to change the rules of the game in such a way that both sides would aim at a tie. The referee’s function in this scenario would be precisely to ensure that result.

Granted, this game would no longer resemble basketball, but rather juggling or see-saw. This does not mean, however, that it would be against reason or without its reasons. Rather, the reasons involved would include the different opportunities faced by different groups, and the principle of dynamic equilibrium that justifies giving differential treatment for different groups. Thus, if the term “neutrality” must be used, one could say that, although the primary aim of affirmative action is consequential neutrality (understood as fairness), this approach also satisfies the requirements for critical neutrality, in that its reasons are precisely to ensure equal conditions for all.

Simon, however, defends the view that neutrality in reasons, and not in consequences, is necessary (a) pragmatically (to protect the university from outside interference); (b) educationally (to prevent biased inquiry) and (c) morally (to protect individual autonomy) (Simon, 1994, p. 10). Moreover, he argues that its loss is all too likely to result in the partisan university that stands for a set of political and ideological principles and is far too intellectually homogenous as a result. The intellectual diversity so essential for effective critical inquiry would be absent or, at best, in severe jeopardy. (Simon, 1994, p. 35)

What Simon does not seem to realize is that university already (or still) is homogeneous and that the “intellectual diversity” which he claims to be “so essential for effective critical inquiry” is already absent or at least severely lacking. It is precisely this

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123 The dichotomy inside-outside is itself controversial.
124 “Individual autonomy” is also problematic, especially as regards the education of adolescents. In the next chapter, I address this point in more detail.
deficiency that makes him present, under the banner of neutrality, arguments such as the following:

Now it would be absurd to argue that government neutrality toward religion has been violated simply because some religions have more adherents than others and because some have no adherents at all. After all, the point of neutrality in this context is not to ensure that every religion has some supporters, or that all religions have equal numbers of supporters, but to make sure that government policy does not officially sanction some religions and suppress others. However, if commitment to particular religions is based on the free decisions of the citizens themselves, government neutrality has not been violated. (Simon, 1994, p. 32)

This analogy is supposed to show that unequal epistemological representation in an institution such as the university does not violate institutional neutrality: it is just part of the *laissez-faire, laissezaller* nature of the university as a market place of ideas.¹²⁵ However, what Simon does not recognize is that some perspectives are not available at the university or in the recognized canon not because they are not at a par with the others, but because they have been officially deemed unimportant. The argument is not that the overall population of Hispanics, blacks or Aboriginals should be exactly the same as that of whites. Rather, the argument is that liberal education should make room for them/us¹²⁶ and their/our cultures. If the population of cultural minorities in the university, for example, is far from proportional to their/our population as a whole (since a cultural minority is not necessarily a numerical minority), this is a sign that there is a barrier, stated or hidden, operating on lines of race, that is keeping them/us away.

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¹²⁵ Another problematically non-neutral analogy in and of itself.
¹²⁶ As a relatively fair-skinned heterosexual Brazilian woman, I never know exactly whether I count as a minority or not: it varies according to the context.
Harvey Siegel on Epistemological Diversity

A more sophisticated argument to the same effect is presented by Harvey Siegel. Unlike Simon, Siegel does admit that some groups have been excluded and marginalized, and that their inclusion in the education research community “has brought new issues to the fore, and has provided new voices, approaches, and substantive and methodological presuppositions to the conversations in which both new and more familiar issues are addressed” (Siegel, 2006, p. 5). Nevertheless, Siegel fails to give full credit to the epistemic significance of inclusion.

In his 2006 “Epistemological Diversity and Education Research: Much Ado About Nothing Much?”, for instance, Siegel asks:

Research in education and the training of education researchers are often said to require attention to epistemological diversity: Researchers ought to be familiar with different ways of knowing and diverse epistemological perspectives. But the notion is unclear. What is “epistemological diversity”? What exactly is epistemological about it? Why is it important for education researchers to be knowledgeable about it? In addressing these questions, I will argue that the call for epistemological diversity is not, where justified, as radical or significant as it is often taken to be; and that, where it is radical or significant, it is not justified. (Siegel, 2006, p. 3, original emphasis)

The main claim of this article is thus two-fold: that diversity when significant, is not epistemic, and when epistemic, it is not significant.

The first horn of this claim, namely, that diversity, when significant, is not epistemic, builds on the argument of a previous work, “What Price Inclusion?” his presidential speech in the 1995 meeting of the Philosophy of Education Society. In that speech, Siegel makes four main claims:

1. Inclusion is not an epistemic virtue, but a moral one
2. Inclusion should not sacrifice standards
3. Standards and inclusion presuppose neutral meta-criteria.

4. Exclusion is justified if proper qualifications are missing

Although Siegel admits that the inclusion of historically marginalized groups has enriched epistemology, he begrudges calling those contributions epistemic:

Although these citations [Collins, Banks, Harding] include important differences, they are agreed that the research questions one asks, deems important, and pursues are influenced by one’s cultural, racial, gender, or otherwise specified location. The point is undeniable. No special new kind of epistemological diversity is introduced by these important considerations concerning cultural and other influences on decisions concerning research agendas. (Siegel, 2006, p. 5)

On the one hand, Siegel denies that inclusion is an epistemic virtue, casting it instead as purely a moral issue: “Inclusion is not an epistemic virtue (…), there is no necessary connection between inclusion and epistemic worthiness, or between exclusion and epistemic defectiveness.” (Siegel, 1995, p. 3) “Why value inclusion, then? In brief, because it is morally wrong to exclude.” (Siegel, 1995, p. 3) “Inclusion is not necessary for good science; exclusion does not guarantee bad science” (Siegel, 1995, pp. 4-5)

On the other hand, however, Siegel does admit that inclusion does have some epistemic benefits:

We should straightforwardly accept the point, stressed by Harding, Longino, and many others, that inclusion, by adding previously ignored perspectives to scientific research and debate, can and often does serve to correct and enhance ongoing theorizing. In this sense, I happily agree that inclusion can be, and often is, an epistemic or methodological virtue. (Siegel, 1995, p. 4)

I agree with Longino that inclusion can have a salutary cause effect in helping to avoid idiosyncrasy and in that way increasing the chances of attaining objectivity in our theoretical endeavors, and I agree that in this sense inclusion can be seen as an epistemic virtue. (Siegel, 1995, footnote 16)
Following Young, and standpoint theorists more generally, I believe that while inclusion is certainly a moral virtue, it is also significant epistemically, as Siegel sometimes admits. I believe that it is extremely important to acknowledge the significance of the epistemic contributions made by specific groups, such as feminists and standpoint theorists. Siegel, however, is very protective of the use of the word “epistemic” and “epistemology.” He refuses to allow the existence of other epistemologies in their own right, trying to reduce them instead to different belief systems or different research methodologies. Sometimes, this reductionism is ridiculously narrow, such as when he reduces methodological diversity to the difference between qualitative and quantitative approaches.

Part of Siegel’s argument is that the variation existing even within the dominating group makes it hard to establish a one-to-one correspondence between groups and their epistemologies:

127 “Philosophers do not typically understand “epistemology” in this way [i.e., as revolving around belief systems], taking it to refer rather to theories of knowledge... The main point to note is that if “epistemological diversity” is taken to refer to alternative beliefs or belief systems, the phenomenon in question is uncontroversial, because all are agreed that beliefs and belief systems do indeed differ.” (Siegel, 2006, p. 4)
128 “[A]s already noted, it is uncontroversial that there is a broad range of alternative ways of conducting education research, that is, different research methodologies. If this is what it means for education research to involve different epistemologies, the existence of these differences is obvious and unproblematic. In this sense, making a fuss about “alternative epistemologies” is indeed much ado about nothing much. Here the question is not a deep philosophical one, but only the practical (although nonetheless difficult) one of the desirability of education for students’ breadth versus depth.” (Siegel, 2006, p. 6)
129 As is well known, education research is also diverse in this way [technique diversity], as scholars often conceive of themselves as either “quantitative” or “qualitative” researchers. Within these two broad categories, there is a wide variety of more specific approaches. The general thesis that there are many legitimate ways to conduct research is unexceptionable. (Siegel, 2006, p. 4)
outlooks or presuppositions seems to me dubious. There is just too much within-group difference in epistemological orientation. (Siegel, 2006, p. 5)

This argument is a clear instance of the logic of substance, and as such, it falls prey to both positivism and reductionism. The positivist aspect of this position is particularly clear in the insistence in seeing Western thought not as specific to a time and place, but as an objective truth “out there.” Epistemology in this view this is seen as a purely intellectual entity, abstract from physical and social realities. The reductionism, on the hand, is clear in the tendency shared by both Siegel and Simon of believing that the Western tradition is already diverse enough – that it already includes every significant way of thinking and is thus comprehensive and universal. Note for instance the narrow conception of epistemic diversity that Simon presents in footnote 14:

In fact, these sorts of controversies among different conceptions of epistemic and moral justification call into question the overdrawn picture of a monolithic ‘Western culture,’ which underlies some of the criticism of the traditional curriculum. The study of Plato, Nietzsche, Hume, Mill, Kant, Marx, Rawls and MacIntyre surely is the study of an extraordinarily diverse group of theorists. (Simon, 1994, p. 85)

Siegel’s position, although considerably more sophisticated, also reflects this problem of believing its own partial view as comprehensive:

Within my own group, advocates and critics can be found of more or less every epistemological stance yet articulated – as a casual glance at [any of the leading philosophy journals] that publish important work in epistemology will reveal. (Siegel, 2006, p. 5)

One could compare this argument to a person with Daltonism who takes pride in being able to read all the infinite things that can be printed by a black and white printer.

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130 “I have already expressed my reason for doubting the very idea that epistemologies can be ascribed to such groups in a straight-forward, one-to-one way. There is simply too much within-group variation to think that each such group (women, people of color, nonheterosexuals) or even specific subgroups (Chicana feminists, African men, White Jewish gay men), can be neatly assigned their own epistemology. Indeed, such an assignment smacks of a problematic essentialism.” (Siegel, 2006, p. 7)
The problem with these two positions is not only the homogeneity they reflect, but also the hegemony. After all, whose epistemological stances get articulated and published in “leading philosophy journals”? The criterion is biased and thus begs the question, as I elaborate below.

**Traditional Western Epistemology as Homogenic and Hegemonic**

A common consequence of social privilege is the ability of a group to convert its perspective on some issues into authoritative knowledge without being challenged by those who have reason to see things differently. Such a dynamic is a major way that political inequality helps reproduce social and economic inequality even in formally democratic processes. (Young, 2002, p. 108)

According to Young, one of the ways that oppression reproduces itself is that the point of view of the privileged group posits itself as universal. The logic of identity then comes into play in that this view is portrayed as objective, neutral, abstract from time and place. The irony of the logic of identity, however, is that although it presents itself as objective, neutral and abstract, it is markedly Western. Traditional Western epistemology thus suffer from an interesting paradox: it believes itself neutral, abstract, objective and universal, when these very aims mark it as being traditionally Western. Scheurich and Young, for instance, complain:

Respected scholars of color have suggested... that the epistemologies we typically use in educational research may be racially biased. They have argued that our epistemologies – not our use of them, but the epistemologies themselves – are racially biased ways of knowing, implicitly proposing, thus, a new category of racism that could be labelled *epistemological racism*. (Scheurich & Young, in Siegel, 2006, p. 3, original emphasis)

To this, Siegel adds:

In these passages [mentioned by Scheurich & Young], the clear suggestion is that cultural or group membership has epistemological consequences,
that culture influences epistemology. But how epistemology might be so influenced is unclear. (Siegel, 2006, p. 3)

It is as if epistemology were in a realm out of reach of any influence. The argument for educational neutrality, such as that offered by Simon and epistemic neutrality, offered by Siegel, typically relies on two distinctions:

1) That between actual and ideal, or “is” vs. “ought”: e.g. “education/educators may perhaps not be neutral, but it/they ought to be; “basketball referees may sometimes not be neutral, but they ought to be.”

2) That between subject and object: e.g. education vs. educators, basketball vs. basketball referees, knowledge vs. knowers, etc.

These two distinctions are closely related. They also have both been called into question. To see how they are related, consider for instance the construction “basketball may not be neutral, but it should be.” This example may strike one as awkward in a way that “education may not be neutral, but it should be” does not. This may seem like an intuitive indication that basketball itself is essentially neutral, even though particular referees may not be. Lack of neutrality in basketball, the argument continues, is due exclusively to the human factor involved, and not to the sport itself; to suggest otherwise is just silly. By analogy, one could infer from this that education too is in itself essentially neutral, even if particular educators fail to be so.

This line of defence maps the first distinction onto the second, in the sense that the abstract entity “basketball” or “education” supplies the norm of how things ought to be, and human beings determine the actual reality of how things are. Any failure to comply with the abstract ideal (which always seems to entail neutrality, whether the
abstract entity in question is basketball, education or science) is due merely to human limitations, and does not affect the abstract ideal itself.

Linguistic intuition, however, is not a fool-proof method of argumentation, and this particular analogy breaks down fairly easily. One needs only to replace “basketball” with, for instance, “ballet.” If ballet is not neutral, then neither is basketball. One could always say that basketball privileges those with a certain height, for instance, or that it is subordinate to the interests of a multi-million dollar industry. Similar arguments could also be made about the sciences, education or philosophy.

It becomes clearer at this point why the distinctions above have been questioned. As I mentioned regarding the principle of equal treatment, both these distinctions assume:

A. equality between those being treated (“the initial condition for all players is the same”); and

B. neutrality on the part of the treatment (be the “treatment” in question education, science, the rules of basketball, or “knowledge” in general).

But these two reductionist assumptions themselves are based on a further assumption, namely:

C. that there is a clear and rigid separation between treatment and treated, where treatment (the type of entities in B) is able to affect treated (the type of entities in A) but not the other way around.

Siegel’s failure to understand how epistemology itself can be affected by difference in groups is an example of meta-assumption C. But this assumption too has recently been called into question (cf. Harding, 1993/2004). The distinction between treatment and treated leaves out an important group: the treaters, those who design and
apply the treatment, such as educators, scientists, medical doctors and basketball referees. Meta-assumption C is thus an instance of the positivism characteristic of the logic of identity.

As I show in the next section, recent theories suggest that the separation between treatment and those being treated is not impermeable as meta-assumption C implies. In particular, the fact that some of those treated are able to affect the treatment while others are not (or not to the same extent) is in itself evidence that not all those receiving treatment are equal – thus assumption A is false. This fact is also evidence that the treatment itself is not and cannot be neutral – and thus assumption B too is false. Assumption C therefore deserves an in-depth consideration: not only does it lie at the heart of the other two assumptions, but it is also a core element of the positivism embedded in the Logic of Identity. Such consideration is offered in the next section.

*Be objective!*

In the Western tradition, those I am calling “treaters” are usually referred to as “knowers,” and are considered to be somewhere between knowledge itself and the object of that knowledge. To extent that they are human, knowers sometimes fall prey to human limitations, such as bias. But in their capacity as embodied representatives of a completely neutral abstract entity (“knowledge”), they should shun any reference to their own selves, striving instead to be as impersonal and as neutral as possible.

Knowers are thus constantly urged to “be objective!” – i.e., to focus solely on the *object* of their knowledge – while “being too subjective” (that is, tainting their knowledge with references to themselves as *subjects* of their knowledge) is often regarded as sufficient grounds for dismissal (Yeoung, 2004). By contrast, one is hardly ever
encouraged to “be subjective!” nor is anything ever criticized for being “too objective.”

“Pure objectivity” is thus generally presented as an unqualified ideal, whereas subjectivity appears as an undesirable necessity to be minimized as much as possible. As Harding puts it: “for empiricist epistemology, the subject or agent of knowledge – that which ‘knows’ the ‘best beliefs of the day’ – is supposed to have a number of distinctive characteristics.” (1993/2004, p. 132) Harding lists four in particular:

1. “[T]his subject of knowledge is culturally and historically disembodied because knowledge is by definition universal.”
2. “[T]he subject of scientific knowledge is different in kind from the objects whose properties scientific knowledge describes and explains.”
3. “[K]nowledge is initially produced (‘discovered’) by individuals (…) not by culturally specific societies or subgroups such as a certain class or gender or race.”
4. “[T]he subject is homogeneous and unitary, because knowledge must be consistent and coherent.”

Feminist movements, the civil rights movement, critical pedagogy, postmodernists and other groups have recently challenged this ideal of the knower as aloof, objective, neutral, an almost impersonal entity (cf. Freire, 1970/2000, Martin, 1981; Rose 1983/2004; Narayan, 1989/2004; Young, 1990; Harding 1993/2004; hooks, 1994). This challenge, as I have mentioned before, operates at a descriptive as well as at a normative level. At the descriptive level, to say that the ideal of objectivity itself is neutral and impersonal is simply inaccurate. As these groups have pointed out, the very

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131 This is not to say that these groups agree on their views of objectivity. Cf. Hartsock (1998a, 1998b) and Hirschmann (1997/2004)
“Feminists’ insistence that scientific knowledge is socially constructed appears in a new light when juxtaposed against my subsumption of the sociology of scientific knowledge within the epistemological tradition. Feminist science studies scholars most evidently differ from the new sociologists in their opposition to relativism, their normative stance toward particular scientific claims, and their willingness to retain and employ suitably revised conceptions of evidence, objectivity, and a distinction between belief and knowledge. Yet in many cases, these familiar differences are a consequence of feminist scholars working toward postepistemological conceptions of knowledge, evidence, justification, and objectivity, and thereby opposing a framework shared by traditional philosophies of science and the new sociologies of scientific knowledge.” (Rouse, 2004, p. 361, original emphasis)
ideal of objectivity is laden with characteristics specific to gender,\textsuperscript{132} race,\textsuperscript{133} class, sexual orientation and physical/mental ability.\textsuperscript{134}

At a more normative level, these groups reject the epistemic assumption that alienating oneself from one’s personal physical reality is the (only or the best) way to reason more clearly. Common to all these groups is a view of epistemology as concerning not detached minds, but as minds and bodies inserted in a social context in time and space.\textsuperscript{135} This is as true of the great authors/scientists/philosophers we teach as of the students and teachers themselves. These are all thinkers, but only insofar as (and not despite the fact that) they are persons (Sharp, 1995, pp. 139-140). A serious problem with

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{132} Martin, for instance, makes the following point: “Scholars maintain (…) that the fundamental scientific norm of objectivity is itself a reflection of the cultural image of masculinity, involving, as it does, a distance or separation between the knower and what is known, the setting aside of feeling, and the rejection of immediate sensory experience. Philosophy is classified as a humanity, not a science; but there, too, the imagery and ideology are related to our cultural definitions of masculinity, with “tough-mindedness” considered a virtue and “softheadness” a vice. (Martin, 1985, p. 25) For other authors’ view on the genderization of objectivity and knowledge, see Code (1991), DuBois (1988, 1991), Haraway (1991), Rose (1983/2004)
\item \textsuperscript{133} bell hooks: “The force that allows white authors to make no reference to racial identity in their books about ‘women’ that are in actuality about white women is the same one that would compel any author writing exclusively on Black women to refer explicitly to their racial identity. (…) “it is the dominant race that reserves for itself the luxury of dismissing racial identity while the oppressed race is made daily aware of their racial identity. It is the dominant race that can make it seem that their experience is representative.” (hooks, in Hartsock, 1980/1998, p. 66)
\item \textsuperscript{134} “[T]he appeal to objectivity is an issue not only between feminist and prefeminist science and knowledge projects but also within each feminist and other emancipatory research agenda. There are many feminisms, some of which result in claims that distort the racial, class, sexuality and gender relationships in society. Which ones generate less or more impartial and distorted accounts of nature and social life?” (Harding, 1993/2004, p. 138)
\item \textsuperscript{135} “The thought of an age is of an age, and the delusion that one’s thought can escape historical locatedness is just one of the thoughts that is typical of the dominant groups in these and other ages. The “scientific world view” is, in fact, a view of (dominant groups in) modern, Western societies, as the histories of science proudly point out. Standpoint theories simply disagree with the further ahistorical and incoherent claim that the content of “modern and Western” scientific thought is also, paradoxically, not shaped by its historical location.” (Harding, 1993/2004, pp. 132-133) Cf. Northrop Frye: “Copernicus is the great symbol for a new realization that such words as “sunrise” and “sunset,” though metaphorically efficient, had become “only” metaphors, and that, so far as they were descriptive, what they described was illusory. Darwin is the great symbol for a new realization that divine creation, as generally conceived, was an illusion projected from the evolutionary operations within nature. Einstein is the great symbol for a new realization that matter, which up to the twentieth century had been the great bastion of the objectivity in the world, was an illusion of energy. With this, however, the sense of the clear separation of subject and object, which was so marked a feature of the scientific attitude up to that point, overreached itself and began to come to an end. It was no longer possible to separate the observer from what he [sic] observes: the observer had to become an observed object too.” (Frye, 1981/1990, p. 14)
\end{itemize}
the ideal of objectivity therefore is that by consistently praising the objective and deriding the subjective, this tradition effectively works to annihilate the subject and to objectify people (cf. Young, 1990, ch. 5).

To say that the subject-object dichotomy leads to the objectification of people is not a mere rhetorical move for dramatic effect: it is the reality that gave rise to these theoretical challenges in the first place. The anti-oppression movements just mentioned arose not as academic endeavours, but as political activism. Their aim was to stop exploitation and violence, not to offer solutions to philosophical problems. Yet, once their different strategies started to be articulated in theory, from the interactions and tensions between groups fighting different types of oppression patterns began to emerge that contributed immensely to the field of epistemology, such as the way they help understand the mechanism of knowledge construction and the notion of objectivity.

136 “Domination always involves the objectification of the dominated; all forms of oppression imply the devaluation of the subjectivity of the oppressed.” (Brittan and Maynard, in Collins, 1986/2004, p. 108)
“[R]ather than getting rid of subjectivity or notions of the subject, as Foucault did, and substituting his notion of the individual as an effect of power relations, we need to engage in the historical, political, and theoretical process of constituting ourselves as subjects as well as objects of history. We need to recognize that we can be the makers of history as well as the objects of those who have made history. Our nonbeing and invisibility was the condition for the taken-for-granted ability of one small segment of the population to speak for all; our various efforts to constitute ourselves as subjects (though struggles for colonial independence, racial and sexual liberation struggles, and so on) were fundamental to creating the preconditions for the current questioning of universalist claims.” (Hartsock, 1998, p. 221)

137 To quote Marx: “The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it.” (Marx, in Hartsock, 1998, p. 77) Cf. Siegel, 2006, for opposite view.


139 “[W]e need an epistemology that recognizes that our practical daily activity contains an understanding of the world — subjugated perhaps, but present. Here I refer to Gramsci’s argument that all men are intellectuals and that everyone has a working epistemology. The point, then, is to read out the epistemologies contained in our various practices. In addition, we must not give up the claim that material life not only structures but also sets limits on understandings of social relations and that in systems of
For example, the unjust consequences of the ideals of objectivity and rationality have prompted some scholars to reject these ideals completely. Others have moved towards keeping one perspective as privileged, and just shifting whose perspective gets privileged. Going too far in this direction may, however, lead to the same problems of exclusion and dogmatism as the traditional approach that it rejects. One interesting development thus was to question the strategy of binary thinking itself. Independently of each other, each of these anti-oppression groups had adopted the strategy to reject the dichotomy that they perceived as underlying the particular oppression they were fighting, such as male-female (feminism), Black-White (civil rights), rich-poor (critical pedagogy), heterosexual-homosexual (gay rights), academy-life (progressive movements). They

domination, the vision available to the ruling groups will be partial and will reverse the real order of things.” (Hartsock, 1998, p. 240)

140 “Some feminists and thinkers from other liberatory knowledge projects have thought that the very notion of objectivity should be abandoned. They say that it is hopelessly tainted by its use in racist, imperialist, bourgeois, homophobic, and androcentric scientific projects. Moreover, it is tied to a theory of representation and concept of the self or subject that insists on a rigid barrier between subject and object of knowledge – between self and Other – which feminism and other new social movements label as distinctively androcentric or Eurocentric.” (Harding, 1993/2004, p. 138)

141 “A standpoint is an engaged vision of the world opposed and superior to dominant ways of thinking. As a proletarian standpoint is a superior vision produced by the experience and oppressive conditions of labor, a feminist standpoint is a superior vision produced by the political conditions and distinctive work of women.” (Ruddick, 1989/2004, p. 162) “Standpoint theory is an explicitlly political as well as social epistemology. Its central and motivating insight is an inversion thesis: those who are subject to structures of domination that systematically marginalize and oppress them may, in fact, be epistemically privileged in some crucial respects. They may know different things, or know somethings better than those who are comparatively privileged (socially, politically), by virtue of what they typically experience and how they understand their experience.” (Wylie, 2004, p. 339) “The standpoint of the oppressed is not just different from that of the ruling class; it is also epistemologically advantageous. It provides the basis for a view of reality that is more impartial than that of the ruling class and also more comprehensive. It is more impartial because it comes closer to representing the interests of society as a whole; whereas the standpoint of the ruling class reflects the interests only of one section of the population, the standpoint of the oppressed represents the interests of the totality in that historical period. Moreover, whereas the condition of the oppressed groups is visible only dimly to the ruling class, the oppressed are able to see more clearly the ruled as well as the rulers and the relation between them. Thus, the standpoint of the oppressed includes and is able to explain the standpoint of the ruling class.” (Jaggar, 2004, p. 57, my emphasis)


143 Not that there were no tension between these perspectives. Mills, for instance, writes: “It is precisely because the working class Marx studied was not an abstraction, but a group composed largely of white males, that their subversive insight into the structure of social oppression (and the Marxist theory derived from it) was only partial. Women’s perspective was required to uncover the significance of rape as a
started to fight these dichotomies themselves as marginalizing and reifying. From the
interactions and tensions between these groups, it began to emerge that:

1) Binary thinking was a common denominator – “the philosophical lynchpin,” to
use Collins words\textsuperscript{144} – in situations of oppression;

2) In particular, most oppression could be subsumed under the mind-body
dichotomy,\textsuperscript{145} which itself seems to be part and parcel of the myth of
neutrality.\textsuperscript{146}

The tendency of thinking in terms of binaries such as mind/body, subject/object,
ideal/actual, treatment/treated are markers of traditional Western thought. While
markedly Western, however, this tendency for abstraction posits itself as universal,
refusing to see the particularities of its own position, and the significance of other
positions. It is thus that the myth of neutrality makes Western thought not only
homogenic, but also hegemonic.

\footnotesize{sustaining mechanism of patriarchal repression. But because the women who developed this analysis were
themselves largely white, they in turn tended to miss the particular historical significance of rape
accusations made against black men by white women. Again, therefore, a theoretical corrective was
necessary, this time in the form of a critique of white, middle-class feminist theory by black women.
Putting all the analyses on the same epistemic plane, it seems to me, contradicts the evident truth that in
each case a better approximation to the holistic reality of the situation is being achieved. An account of
social subordination that does not draw on the experiences of women and blacks is simply theoretically
weaker than one that does.” (Mills, 1998, p. 407)
\textsuperscript{144} “Either/or dualist thinking, or what I will refer to as the construct of dichotomous oppositional
difference, may be a philosophical lynchpin in systems of race, class, and gender oppression. One
fundamental characteristic of this construct is the categorization of people, things and ideas in terms of their
difference from one another. For example, the terms in dichotomies such as black/white, male/female,
reason/emotion, fact/opinion, and subject/object gain their meaning only in relation to their difference from
their oppositional counterparts.” (Collins, 1986/2004, p. 110)
\textsuperscript{145} “[R]acist and sexist exclusion from the public have a source in the structure of modern reason and its
self-made opposition to desire, body, and affectivity. Modern philosophy and science established unifying,
controlling reason in opposition to and mastery over the body, and then identified some groups with reason
and others with the body.” (Young, 1990, p. 124)
\textsuperscript{146} “Important strands in feminist epistemology hold the view that our concrete embodiments as members
of a specific class, race, and gender as well as our concrete historical situations necessarily play significant
roles in our perspective on the world; moreover, no point of view is “neutral” because no one exists
unembedded in the world. Knowledge is seen as gained not by solitary individuals but by socially
Young, 1990, esp. chapter 4.
From homogeny to hegemony

My argument so far suggests that the myth of neutrality is homogenic. Authors who defend the myth of neutrality thus believe that the tradition they defend is already “diverse enough,” therefore questioning the need for more diversity:

Why is it important that we strive ‘to prevent a recurring pattern of epistemological single-mindedness’ (Pallas, 2001, p. 7) in our students? Presumably, because such ‘epistemological single-mindedness’ is a bad thing, something to be deplored and avoided in our graduate students. But why? (Siegel, 2006, p. 7)

We can compare this type of reductionism to a Daltonic who asks: “Why more colours?” “Why bother with so called “green” and “red” when we already have so many beautiful ‘real’ colours?” Or as if the set of natural numbers could say: “Why do we need negative or irrational numbers? We are already infinite, cannot be more diverse than that!” It might difficult to convince our stubborn Daltonic that red and green are different from what he already has in his colour arsenal. He might be tempted to reduce them to other colours, as if red was just another type of yellow, and green just another type of blue.147

In addition to being homogenic, the neutrality position such as Siegel and Simon defend is also hegemonic. As such, it is oppressive in that it excludes some, privileges others, and alienates all. This can be seen especially in Siegel’s “What Price Inclusion?” I mentioned above that in this paper, Siegel makes four main claims:

1. Inclusion is not an epistemic virtue, but a moral one;

2. Inclusion should not sacrifice standards;

3. Standards and inclusion presuppose neutral meta-criteria;

147 Interestingly, if I remember correctly from my Japanese 101 lessons, Japanese only has a word for blue and green. If they need to be distinguished, then they appeal to circumlocutions, such as “aoi” like the sky or “aoi” like grass. But they perceive the difference, while the Daltonic does not.
4. Exclusion is justified if proper qualifications are missing.

Earlier in this chapter, I addressed the first claim, that inclusion is not an epistemic but rather a moral virtue. This claim, I argued, illustrates how the myth of neutrality works to privilege some: the label “epistemic” is appropriated by Siegel as applying solely to Western epistemology, dismissing all the other types of epistemology as inferior, insignificant or simply non-existing. This is the logic of identity in action, which casts difference as opposition.

Siegel’s second worry is about lack of standards or criteria:

[T]he rejection of male criteria of theory evaluation in favour of other, incompatible, “female criteria,” must – if the preference for the latter is to be defensible and non-arbitrary – rely upon (meta-) criteria in accordance with which these two rival sets of criteria can, themselves, be fairly evaluated. Standards and criteria are, in this way, required for the conducting of any sort of serious scholarly endeavour, including that of arguing for the ideal of inclusion (or for feminism). In short, one cannot coherently embrace the ideal of inclusion and, at the same time, reject standards entirely. (Siegel, 1995, p. 10)

Consequently, if we value inclusion – as we should – we must have, and value, standards as well. Not only is there no fundamental incompatibility between inclusion and standards; the former requires the later. (Siegel, 1995, p. 11)

This is similar to Simon’s argument about what he sees to be the problem with multiperspectival positions. However, a Politics of Difference does not mean that “everything goes,” but rather, that the standards and criteria involved aim at justice for differently situated people. Young would not dispute that criteria and standards are important. It is just that these criteria will not be abstract, but concrete and embedded:

The conclusions to political discussion and argument [...] are particular judgements about what ought to be done. Appeals to principle have a place in such discussion, but they must be applied to particular situations in the context of particular social relationships. Thus participants in political discussion cannot transcend their particularity. If participants are to make objective judgements appropriate for their context, they must
express their own particularity to others and learn of the particularity of those differently situated in the social world where they dwell together. (Young, 2002, p. 113)

Young admits the need for a more objective, more comprehensive view of social reality. Paying attention to difference, according to Young, is more objective, because it increases the store of available knowledge and reduces mutual ignorance.

Siegel, as I mentioned above, admits that inclusion can have some epistemic value, when it serves to correct biased opinions. Nevertheless, besides being much weaker, Siegel’s concession on the epistemic value of inclusion bears two important differences to the way Young for instance sees it. Not only do authors such as Siegel and Simon believe that there can be a “neutral” metaperspective: they appropriate this

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148 “Objectivity in political judgement, as I understand that term, does not consist in discovering some truth about politics or institutions independent of the awareness and action of social members. But it is also not simply some kind of sum of their differentiated view points. An objective account of social relations and social problems, and an objective judgement of what policies and actions would address those problems, instead are accounts and judgements people construct for themselves from a critical, reflective, and persuasive interaction among their diverse experiences and opinion. (...) Without such inclusive discussion, privileged social positions are able to make judgements and take actions that suit themselves and rationalizations for them that go unchallenged.” (Young, 2002, p. 114)

149 “A democratic public ought to be fully inclusive of all social groups because the plurality of perspectives they offer to the public helps to disclose the reality and objectivity of the world in which they dwell together. (...) The appearance of a shared world to all who dwell within it precisely requires that they are plural, differentiated, and separate, with different location in and perspectives on that world that are the product of their social action. By communicating to one another their differing perspectives on the social world in which they dwell together, they collectively constitute an enlarged understanding of that world.” (Young, 2002, p. 112)

150 “Communication of the experience and knowledge derived from different social positions helps correct biases derived from the dominance of partial perspective over the definition of problems or their possible solutions. Such differentiated communication also enables a public collectively to construct a more comprehensive account of how social processes work and therefore of the likely consequences of proposed policies. Not only does the explicit inclusion of different social groups in democratic discussion and decision-making increase the likelihood of promoting justice because the interest of all are taken into account. It also increases that likelihood by increasing the store of social knowledge available to participants.” (Young, 2002, p. 83)

151 “Paying specific attention to differentiated social groups in democratic discussion and encouraging public expression of their situated knowledge thus often makes it more possible than it would otherwise be for people to transform conflict and disagreement into agreement. Speaking across differences in a context of public accountability often reduces mutual ignorance about one another’s situations, or misunderstanding of one another’s values, intentions, and perceptions, and gives everyone the enlarged thought necessary to come to more reasonable and fairer solutions to problems.” (Young, 2002, p. 118)

152 “There is also, sometimes, an additional benefit which accrues to inclusion: as just noted, it is factually incorrect to attribute to particular people properties which they do not, in fact, have, and striving for inclusion can sometimes help to avoid this mistake.” (Siegel, 1995, footnote 13)
metaperspective as being their own. In other words, they believe that their own partial perspective is neutral and universal, transcending all other perspectives, and in position to judge and evaluate all other “alternative perspectives.”

My claim here is that “alternative epistemologies” themselves admit of critical evaluation. As noted above, such evaluation will itself be conducted in terms of relevant criteria, such criteria being the property not of any given epistemology but rather of an overarching epistemological and philosophical perspective (or “metaperspective”) that is neutral with respect to them all. (Siegel, 2006, p. 7, original emphasis)

By positing itself as a neutral arbiter of other perspectives, the Western traditional thought such as defended by Siegel and Simon once again prove themselves to be oppressive, by privileging their own view while excluding or dismissing others. The exclusive nature of this position is nowhere clearer than in Siegel’s claim that exclusion is justified if proper qualifications are missing. But this type of argument makes a number of assumptions. First, it does not leave room for the hypothesis that the so-called “experts” might be wrong. Second, it does not leave room for exclusion on the basis of sheer prejudice: it takes the term “expert” for granted, without looking at how the term itself might be biased. If one were to follow this use of the word, should privileged white

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153 “The more important point is this: Epistemologies are not all born equal; those that deserve to count as legitimate epistemological alternatives must prove their mettle in the give-and-take of scholarly disputation. Some proposals will survive such disputations; others not. As suggested above, the scholarly education research community should endorse pluralism, not relativism.” (Siegel, 2006, p. 7)

154 “[T]here is a genuine tension between inclusion and one common standard – namely, that of qualifications or expertise. (…) Participants in such conversations can surely distinguish between those who clearly can, and those who clearly cannot meaningfully contribute to their conversations, and are surely within their rights to prefer the former. Of course, that is not to suggest that someone who feels wrongly excluded cannot protest or try to show how their exclusion is in some way or other unjust or otherwise mistaken. Nevertheless, for conversations to be maximally functional, or maximally interesting, informative, or communicative for their participants, some potential participants may well be best left out.” (Siegel, 1995, p. 11, original emphasis) “I trust it is clear that this sort of exclusion – on the basis of lack of qualifications or expertise – is completely compatible with the ideal of inclusion articulated and defended above. For exclusion based upon either lack of qualifications or expertise, or failure to meet appropriate standards governing scholarly exchange, involves no moral failing. It does not fail to treat the excluded with respect.” (Siegel, 1995, p. 11)
men therefore be excluded from discussions on oppression on the grounds that they lack the qualification to understand oppression?

Granted, Siegel does admit that there are problems with the traditional position. But he tends to congratulate himself too soon, falling prey to the benign tyrant syndrome and condescendingly belittling the views and criticisms of underprivileged groups.

Another way that Siegel illustrates the hegemonic aspect of traditional Western thought is through “Master’s tools” type of argument:

The only way to expose and overcome such abuse is to deal with it by way of critique – by making the case (by way of appeal to legitimate criteria, locally and neutrally applied) that the critique in question does not stand up to critical evaluation but is rather a matter of inappropriate imposition. (...) To be epistemologically effective, such criticism depends upon appeal to the criteria embedded in directives such as “Don’t beg the question against the position you are attempting to criticize”; “Be fair in your criticism”; “Don’t assume without justification what your opponent denies” and so forth. (Siegel, 2006, p. 9)

Kathryn Morgan compares this type of argument to the “benevolence” of her son in having his friends play with his own toys because “his own toys are better” (Morgan, 1995). The problem with this argument, besides the imposition of one’s own standards is that it assumes the social atomism that all are treated equally and listened to with equal

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155 “This is a deep and serious problem that the position I have been defending must satisfactorily address. Happily, it does so, by making clear that charges of hegemonic abuse of power, just like criticisms of alternative epistemologies, must be justified on the basis of reasons and evidence, and so must themselves appeal to relevant criteria.” (Siegel, 2006, p. 9)

“Education research should indeed make room for alternative meanings, values, and ways of knowing. All of this is captured by pluralism. But saying this, or indeed making any claim about education research, requires appeal to ‘the very tools of mainstream philosophical thought.’ Consequently, the appeal to such tools is not necessarily or inevitably a hegemonic abuse of power. Sometimes it is.” (Siegel, 2006, p. 9)

“Of course, to say that standards are required for the rational defense of the ideal of inclusion, or that rational standards are required for any sort of serious intellectual work whatever, is not to say that particular standards, or particular understandings of them, are, themselves, beyond critical challenge. On the contrary, one major sort of intellectual advance is precisely the sort which allows us to realize that our standards, or our interpretations of them, have, in one way or another, been defective and stand in need of criticism and improvement.” (Siegel, 1995, p. 10)
respect. It does not make provisions for those whose voices are consistently not heard, or those who are not even allowed to speak.

The point of drawing attention to issues of oppression is not to allocate blame, but to draw attention to weaknesses – and injustices – of the dominant position. As Young says: “Blame is a backward-looking concept. Calling on agents to take responsibility for their actions, habits, feelings, attitudes, images and associations, on the other hand, is forward looking” (Young, 1990, p. 151). Having defended the neutral position for most of my academic life, I can say that proponents of this position are not necessarily in bad faith, but rather severely misinformed.\(^{156}\)

Intended or not, this attitude is not only mistaken, but harmful. To argue that philosophy education should “continue” to be neutral is in effect to defend that it should favor a few to the detriment of many. This is because education as has been traditionally conceived in the West (and philosophy education in particular) reflects values and concerns of a very specific group of people (i.e., white bourgeois heterosexual men) and dismiss those of other groups as deviant or non-existent. Even when these spots are open to people of different groups, to be able to occupy those spots and succeed in them people have to work on a *modus operandi* that is alienating not only because it forces them out of their group identity (e.g., masculinization, whitening, forced heterosexuality, westernization), but also because by definition this *modus operandi* implies dominance and exclusion.

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\(^{156}\) As Napoleon Bonaparte reportedly said: “Never ascribe to malice what can adequately be explained by incompetence.”
Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter I argued that the myth of neutrality, that is, the belief that knowledge, education or epistemology are or should be neutral and objective, is a common manifestation of what Young calls the Logic of Identity. By using works of Robert L. Simon and Harvey Siegel as illustrative samples, I argued that this very belief that knowledge, education or epistemology are or should be neutral and universal marks the myth of neutrality as particularly Western. I argued moreover that the traditional defense of neutrality as presented by Simon and Siegel is not only narrow-minded in its representation of diversity and thus homogeneous, but also homogenizing. As such, the myth of neutrality is also hegemonic and oppressive in that it posits itself as above other views, privileging itself while dismissing other views as inferior or non-existing. In the next chapter, I show how Young’s Politics of Difference can inform a conception of philosophy education that avoids the problems presented in this chapter.
Chapter 5: Proposing a Philosophy of Many

In this thesis, I propose a different approach to philosophy education in general, and to High School Philosophy specifically. This approach, which I have named Philosophy of Many (PoM), is my adaptation of Young’s Politics of Difference to the teaching of Philosophy and my alternative to both the selective and the universal approaches to HSP. The main contribution of Young’s Politics of Difference for this thesis is her rejection of the logic of identity, which conceptualizes everything as fixed essences, and tries to reduce everything to unity, sameness and homogeneity. Young carries this rejection on two main fronts: in moving away from the positivism of assuming current structures as an immutable given and from the reductionism of reducing things to sameness. A critical positive normative theory replaces the positivism whereas attention to social difference replaces reductionism. (Young, 1990, p. 3)

Accordingly, PoM moves away from the Logic of Identity and homogeneity, with its accompanying positivism and reductionism. The “Philosophy” part of PoM counteracts positivism in that it does not assume philosophy as fixed, but as a work in process. It moves away from the distributive pattern that sees philosophy education as a neutral abstract substance to be distributed. Instead, it sees it as an ongoing process, located in time and space, shaping and being shaped by society. The “Many” part of PoM, on the other hand, counteracts reductionism in that it makes space for heterogeneity. It moves away both from the elitist view that sees philosophy as a proper field of study for only a select few, as well as from the “one size fits all” attitude typical of the universal approach. Instead, PoM looks at ways that philosophy can evolve so as to include more people, more topics and more approaches.
Rejecting Positivism and Reductionism in Philosophy Education

Dictionaries correctly, inspiringly, but unhelpfully, define “philosophy” as “love of wisdom,” but a better definition would be “reflective and critical enquiry.” Philosophy is of course a subject as well as a process though a very comprehensive one: its two great questions might be said to be “What is there?” and “What matters in what there is?” (Grayling, 2008, p. viii)

The questions of “what is there and what matters in what there is?” are urgent questions to ask not only in and by philosophy, but also of philosophy. First, as the UNESCO 2007 report points out, these questions are necessary because they are philosophical in and of themselves\(^{157}\) (UNESCO, 2007, pp. xvii-xviii). A second and more important reason for asking “What is there in philosophy (as a process and as a subject)?” “And what matters in what is there?” is therefore that, despite philosophy’s traditional obsession with rigour and objectivity, definitions of philosophy often conflate the descriptive with the prescriptive. In other words, philosophy frequently seems to be simply what the person(s) offering the definition would like it to be: the particular is posited as universal. The Grayling passage above is a good example of this point. After all, what makes “reflective and critical enquiry” a better definition than “love of wisdom” is an open question: it is not clear who decided that it was better, nor how or why. More importantly, it is not clear what exactly “reflective and critical enquiry” means. The

\(^{157}\) “[I]t is already inherently difficult to define what is meant by ‘philosophy’ and ‘philosophize:’ a genuine philosophical question! Philosophy is endlessly inquiring into what it is not: morality, science etc. – and into what it really is, a certain type of knowledge, but which? A practice, but of what kind? The answers vary considerably from philosopher to philosopher: thinking for oneself or living wisely; interpreting the world or transforming it; conforming to a world order or revolutionizing it; aiming at pleasure or virtue; learning to live or to die; thinking conceptually or metaphorically. Just so many questions in which the conception and the practice of philosophy also varies widely depending on the different cultural areas.” (UNESCO, 2007, pp. xvii-xviii)
problem is not that I disagree with this definition, but rather, that it is hard to find someone who would.\textsuperscript{158}

According to R. G. Collingwood “[t]he question what philosophy is, cannot be separated from the question what philosophy ought to be” (Collingwood, 1933, p.4) – that is, the descriptive cannot be separated from the prescriptive.\textsuperscript{159} In order to prevent what he calls “philosophical utopianism,” Collingwood posits two conditions which any account of philosophical method must satisfy. First, such an account must look back to what has been done in order to keep touch with facts. However, and this is the second condition, such an account should not “replace a philosophical question by a historical one.” Prominent in both Collingwood’s conditions is the concern to keep the account of what philosophy is grounded on experience: “the final appeal must be to our own experience of philosophical work, and to our consciousness that when we are engaged in it these are the principles which we are trying to follow.” (Collingwood, 1933, p. 4)

When I say that philosophy tends to be simply what the person providing the definition wants it to be, I am neither denouncing nor defending relativism, but rather, I am trying to comply with Collingwood’s conditions. If I candidly try to keep in touch with facts by looking back to what has been done, I find that, in my experience of philosophical work, philosophy is often defined in terms of the effects which those defining it expect it to produce. The following passage from Siegel is a good illustration of this point:

I have great sympathy for the view that including philosophy in the school Curriculum is a good thing, for all the usual reasons: exposure to some of the world’s greatest thinkers and thoughts; introduction to rigorous

\textsuperscript{158} For excellent discussions on the merits and limitations of a “critical education,” see Martin (1992) and Burbules (1999).

\textsuperscript{159} “Consequently, when we set out to give an account of philosophical method, what we are trying to describe is not so much a method actually followed by ourselves or any one else, as a method which in our philosophical work we are trying to follow, even if we never entirely succeed.” (Collingwood, 1933, p.4)
argumentative and analytical methods, encouragement of habits of self-reflection and self-criticism; enhancement of traits such as open-mindedness and intellectual humility and so on. (Siegel, 2008, p. 78)

Unsurprisingly, Siegel here conflates description with prescription: his reasons for supporting the introduction of philosophy in schools is completely dependent on the effects which he associates with the study of philosophy. These effects are in fact part of his very definition of philosophy, a definition which is not as universally shared as Siegel makes it appear. The “usual” reasons which Siegel presents are thus neither the only ones nor the strongest ones: they are simply the ones he likes best. But as the 2007 UNESCO study cautions: “One must be very careful when defining capacities or skills that are specifically philosophical, for such definitions may well not be universal.” (UNESCO, 2007, p. 20).

Leaving aside for now the more difficult question of what is meant by “philosophy,” even the “many” half of “Philosophy of Many” can mean a variety of things, such as:

2. Many how? In quantity? In quality?
3. Many why?
   (a) Is it any different from what has been done all these centuries? How?
   (b) Is it any better from what has been done all these centuries? How?

“Unless confronted with different perspectives on social relations and events, different values and language, most people tend to assert their perspective as universal. When social privilege allows some group perspectives to dominate a public while others are silent, such universalizing of the particular will be reaffirmed by many others. Thus the test of whether a claim upon the public is just or merely an expression of self-interest is best made when those making it must confront the opinion of others who have explicitly different, though not necessarily conflicting experiences, priorities, and needs (cf. Sunstein, 1988, p. 1588). As person of social privilege, I am more likely to go outside myself and have regard for social justice when I must listen to the voice of those my privilege otherwise tends to silence.” (Young, 1990, p. 186)
My answer to all these questions in a nutshell is: “yes,” “all of the above.” I here defend the view that the discipline of philosophy be expanded so as to reach a wider variety of people and of topics, both in quantity and in quality, not only because this is different than what has been done, but better than what has been done, both through the “selective” and through the “universal” approach.

The first question to consider therefore is what the term “Many” does, when added to the term “Philosophy” by itself. Is “Philosophy of the Many” different, or better than “Philosophy” pure and simple? If so, how? First, to paraphrase Oscar Wilde, philosophy is rarely pure, and never simple. Up to the 20th century, Western philosophy was predominantly, if not exclusively, what I call “Philosophy of the Few” (“PoF”). It was reserved for an extremely selective group, mainly White men. Its methods were for the most part analytic, rigid and/or abstract; its contents focused first and foremost on issues of mind and reason, to the exclusion of issues of the body, emotions and interpersonal relations (even my favourite main stream philosophers – Plato, Augustine and Descartes – either failed to address these topics, or addressed them in a derogatory manner). To the extent that PoM is a view of philosophy that goes in the opposite direction in each of the categories of who does what kind of philosophy, how and why, PoM is certainly different from PoF. The crucial question then becomes: is the change from PoF to PoM a change for the better, or for the worse? This thesis argues that it is a change for the better, and a necessary change at that.

One of the consequences of the social changes in the West in the 20th century was that a liberal education became possible for many people who were previously excluded, such as women and racial minorities (cf. Young, 1990, p. 7, pp. 87-88, p. 153ff.). But

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161 “The Importance of Being Earnest,” Act 1
although a lot of progress has been made in this regard in the last 50 years, there is a lot of progress still to be made. As Young says:

New social movements of group specificity do not deny the official story’s claim that the ideal of liberation as eliminating difference has brought significant improvement in the status of excluded groups. Its main quarrel is with the story’s conclusion, namely, that since we have achieved formal equality, only vestiges and holdovers of differential privilege remain, which will die out with the continued persistent assertion of an ideal of social relations that make differences irrelevant to a person’s life prospects. The achievement of formal equality does not eliminate social differences, and rhetorical commitment to the sameness of persons makes it impossible even to name how those differences presently structure privilege and oppression. (Young, 1990, pp. 163-164)\textsuperscript{162}

It is naïve to think that it is just a matter of time until the next generations finally remove any residue of the hegemonic attitude that has been ingrained for millennia – that all we have to do is fold our arms and wait for oppression to run its course. On the contrary, as Newton’s Law of Inertia states, things will continue to move in a constant trajectory straightforward unless a force in the opposite direction is applied to it. This is true of abstract entities, such as social trends, just as it is true of bodies. PoM, the conception of philosophy education proposed in this thesis, is intended as a contribution to the forces counteracting oppressive inertia, in that it examines how to make philosophy more accessible and relevant to historically marginalized groups, such as racial minorities, women, the poor, those with physical or mental disabilities, as they go through the secondary school system.

As became evident in the transition from first-wave to second-wave feminism (Martin, 1985), however, in order for philosophy to be more inclusive, it needs to do

\textsuperscript{162} "To be clear and persuasive in our claims about contemporary group oppression and its reproduction, we must affirm that explicit and discursively focused racism and sexism have lost considerable legitimacy. We must identify a different social manifestation of these forms of group oppression corresponding to specific contemporary circumstances, new forms which have both continuities and discontinuities with past structures." (Young, 1990, pp. 130-131)
more than simply reach out to more people. It must also reflect their experiences and priorities. Admittedly, the increased diversity in the population with access to a liberal education has already brought to the fore a range of questions that had never been examined through the academic lens before, as Siegel himself admits:

The inclusion in the education research community of those groups have traditionally been the victims of exclusion or marginalization has brought new issues to the fore, and has provided new voices, approaches, and substantive and methodological presuppositions to the conversations in which both new and more familiar issues are addressed. (Siegel, 2006, p. 5)

Prior to the 20th century, issues of gender and sexuality, race, class, mental and physical ability had hardly been issues deserving scholarly attention. Granted, canonical authors such as Plato, Aristotle and Mill sometimes did address topics such as gender, race and class. Nevertheless, seminal though these works were, they did not (and probably could not) do more than touch the surface of these particular icebergs. This can in large part be explained by the fact that those who experienced oppression in these terms were not allowed to give voice to it – at least not in a “serious” scholarly fashion (Cf. Young, 1990, p. 127). The scholarly realm was simply off-boundaries for those who experienced oppression the most. Nevertheless, although the 20th century has seen an exponential increase in attention to each of these issues, some aspects of oppressive mentality die hard. They are so ingrained that in many circles – and philosophy is no exception – a discussion about issues of social justice still meets resistance, denial or disdain. One might object, for instance, that HSP is an issue in philosophy education and
not political activism. One of my tasks in this thesis is to challenge the assumption that the political is irrelevant when it comes to philosophy education.\footnote{As Droit says: “Must we ‘politicize’ the teaching of philosophy? The reply is ‘no.’ On the other hand, to hope for neutrality would be an illusion, and perhaps even worse. Philosophical education should not prepare students to live in a hypothetical world of ideas, but to live right here, in the world of men and women. This is a world of sound and fury, and also of injustice, oppression and subterfuge. Indifference towards the political is impossible. What then is to be done?” (Droit, 1995, p. 127)}

Authors who defend neutrality tend to be disdainful of any talk of “oppression,” which, in my view, shows a certain callousness to the seriousness of the issues in question. A classical example of this is Searle (1990/1994), in which he claims, among other things, that:

[M]any members of the cultural left think that the primary function of teaching the humanities is political; they do not really believe that the humanities are valuable in their own right except as a means of achieving “social transformation.” (Searle, 1994, p. 197)

It is important, however, to get rid of the ridiculous notion that there is something embarrassing or lamentable about the fact that most of prominent political and intellectual leaders of our culture over the past two thousand years or so have been white males. This is just a historical fact whose causes should be explored and understood. To deny it or attempt to suppress the works of such thinkers is not simply racism, it is unintelligent. (Searle, 1990/1994, p. 214)\footnote{“To me, the amazing thing about Allan Bloom’s book was not just its prodigious commercial success – more than half a year at the top of The New York Times’s best-seller list – but the depth of the hostility and even hatred that it inspired among a large number of professors.” (Searle, 1994, p. 189) “Anybody who has been to such a conference will recognize the atmosphere. It is only within such a setting that Bloom and Hirsch (one a professor of philosophy in Chicago, the other a professor of English in Virginia) can seem (to people who are themselves professors somewhere) to exemplify “the privileged and the powerful.” (Searle, 1994, p. 193)}

The point of inclusive measures, however, is not “to deny or suppress” the works of white males. Rather, it is, to use Searle’s own words, to explore and understand the historical causes of an oppressive reality that, though still much less intense than in the past, is still far from being overcome.\footnote{Compare with Martin: “The reader may wonder why we need to reclaim an earlier conversation about the education of women if our conversation today repeats its dominant themes. But, of course, that is precisely the reason we must reclaim it. To adopt one or another position of earlier generations without}
marks the defense of neutrality is thus not only mistaken, but harmful. It shrugs aside the struggles of oppressed groups to meet standards that are not at all neutral to them. Harvey Siegel attributes this discrepancy to different conceptions of philosophy:

I suspect that, in the end, this disagreement concerns alternative visions of philosophy. On my (admittedly traditional) view, philosophy is fundamentally concerned with reasons, arguments, and, with Socrates, is committed to following the argument wherever it leads – that is, to basing belief and action on epistemically forceful reasons. The aim of the exercise is the discovery of philosophical truths. While those truths may concern matters of social justice, the philosophical enterprise does not have as its goal the bringing about of social justice or social transformation, Marx’s thesis on Feuerbach to the contrary notwithstanding. (Siegel, 1995, p. 11)

There are two main problems with this line of argument: first, as I argued above, the answer to the question “what is philosophy?” often adjusts to suit the answerer’s preference. Second, what if the argument leads to action on social justice and transformation: should we not follow it there? Aristotle’s practical syllogism might help make a case that we should. PoM is intended to help dissolve some of this lingering resistance. By presenting PoM, I am drawing from and adding to different types of anti-oppressive initiatives that strive to broaden not only who counts as a “philosopher,” but also what counts as worthy of philosophical attention.

profiting from the intellectual examination to which it has been subjected is to project its weaknesses into our future. We need to listen to what Wollstonecraft had to say to Rousseau, and what she had to say to Plato, and what Plato might have said to Wollstonecraft so that we do not repeat their mistakes.” (1985b, p. 10)

166 The same is true of the question “What would Socrates do?” For an interesting discussion of this point, see Betty A. Sichel’s “Your Socrates, My Socrates, Everyone Has a Socrates” (1998).
Implementing a PoM

My proposal in this thesis is to extract a few main elements of Young’s Politics of Difference and show how they can be put to use in HSP. In order to do this, I focus on three main points: Young’s emphasis on the importance of social difference, her definition of oppression and her distinction between autonomy and empowerment. These three concepts are related to each other like a Russian doll: Young’s definition of empowerment depends on her definition of oppression, and likewise, her definition of oppression depends on her definition of social difference. In other words, attention to social difference is necessary but not sufficient to fight oppression in Young’s terms and likewise, attention to oppression is necessary but not sufficient for empowerment. Young’s notion of social groups as relational, multiple and cross-cutting, as well as her definitions of oppression and empowerment which presuppose her definition of social groups help Young fight the positivism and reductionism typical of the Logic of Identity in a way that is fluid and multifaceted.

HSP and Social Difference

In the previous chapters I claimed repeatedly that HSP literature lacks a positive conception of social groups. I argued that this lack is problematic and that there are oppressive consequences to treating everyone as “the same.” In this chapter, I address the positive side of my argument and illustrate how Young’s notion of social difference can help develop adolescents’ “ability to play and communicate with others or to express their feelings and perspective on social life in contexts where others can listen” (Young, 1990, p. 38). As Audre Lorde says:
Advocating the mere tolerance of difference (...) is a total denial of the creative function of difference in our lives. For difference must be not merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic. Only then does the necessity for interdependency become unthreatening. (Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tools,” p. 99, in Hartsock, 1980/1998, p. 67)

In other words, social difference should be considered, not as deviance or lack, but as social wealth. As Young says, “political claims asserted from the specificity of social group position, and which argue that the polity should attend to these social differences, often serve as a resource for, rather than an obstruction of, democratic communication that aims at justice” (Young, 2002, p. 82).

Often in the HSP literature, however, we see difference and diversity as a challenging obstacle to be surmounted. Mason, for instance, speaks with a certain disdain about how the “equalitarian” character of high school means that “students in this institution vary widely in ability, some not developing a high level of reading ability” (Mason, 1967, p. 205). Underneath this remark is an advocacy for the selective approach to philosophy: philosophy should be reserved for college students because they are part of an intellectual elite with a “more adequate” – and homogeneous – level of reading ability.

While in favour of introducing philosophy in high school (even if only “selectively”), the 1958 APA likewise also casts difference as a disorienting challenge. The conclusions of the 1958 APA report are summarized as follows:

We find the range of available topics so broad; the historical evidence so widespread, and its relevance so difficult to assess; the variations in American students’ abilities and in their teachers’ preparation so extended; and the theoretical considerations, pro and con, so complex; that we presently recommend no single, concerted program of action on a national level. (APA, 1958, in APA, 1976, p. 80)
Operative in this passage is a lament over difference, and a “longing for sameness.” In other words, difference and diversity emerge as difficult challenges in this passage, inasmuch as they prevent the APA from doing what it perceives to be its job as professional association of philosophers to provide “a single concerted program for action.” Difference is thus not seen as a positive resource, but rather, as a difficult obstacle to be overcome.

A good illustration of how social difference can be asserted and valued in HSP is the Ontario High School Philosophy initiative. A remarkable feature of the Ontario HSP Program is precisely its ability to provide a “single concerted program of action” for a whole jurisdiction, while valuing difference and diversity. The Ontario Curriculum offers a range of suggestions for how to encourage student participation and how to accommodate different types of learning styles\textsuperscript{167} and abilities.\textsuperscript{168} The Course Profiles, elaborated in 2001 (grade 11) and 2002 (grade 12) take the issue of diversity and inclusiveness even further, dedicating a whole section to it, entitled “Creating an Inclusive Learning Environment.”\textsuperscript{169} This attention to social difference means that not

\textsuperscript{167} “Given the diversity of learning styles present in today’s classroom, it is crucial that every effort be made to use a variety of resources, e.g., print, electronic, artistic, as learning aids. Likewise, every effort should be made to include philosophical material that represents a balance in gender, religion, race, and ethnicity.” (CP12Public, 2002, p. 3) Cf. also the Considerations for Planning for the now extinct Ontario Academic Credit (OAC): “To ensure that the learning outcomes are achieved, a variety of resources should be available to students taking the OAC in Philosophy. Students need to read both primary sources (i.e., actual writings of some major philosophers) and secondary sources, including contemporary philosophical texts and case studies. They should also have access to other learning media, such as videotapes or films. Field trips may be planned so that students can attend lectures on topics related to their studies. Resources may also be brought to the school, for example, guest speakers.” (OAC, 1994, Considerations for Planning)

\textsuperscript{168} The accommodations suggested for students with learning disabilities range from early assessment of student reading comprehension level; scaffolding to assist students in generating and organizing ideas before completing tasks and allow extra time to complete assignments; modelling of “philosophical behaviour” (i.e. how to draw inferences or to assess the implications of case study materials); and that tasks be adjusted for students with visual impairments or motor dysfunctions. (CP11Public 2001; p. 15; CP12Public, 2002, p. 12; CP12Catholic, 2002, p. 15)

\textsuperscript{169} “For students to be engaged in what they are learning they must see a relevance to their lives and see themselves represented in the material presented. In the diverse classrooms of today, it is crucial that every effort be made to draw on readings, visual sources, and other learning aids that reflect a balance in gender,
only are previously excluded groups now included, but they are also represented in the curriculum and their attributes are valued. This helps counteract alienation and oppression, especially in the forms of marginalization and cultural imperialism.

A second way in which the Ontario curriculum pays attention to social difference is that it requires the teacher to include authors from outside of the Western tradition in each and every unit. “Students will learn critical-thinking skills, the main ideas expressed by philosophers from a variety of world traditions, how to develop and explain their own philosophical ideas, and how to apply those ideas to contemporary social issues and personal experiences” (Ontario HSP Curriculum Guidelines, p. 118, my emphasis). Such recommendation is reinforced on the guidelines for most units, where references such as “de Beauvoir,” “feminism,” “Confucianism,” “Buddhism” (p. 114); “Avicenna, Buddha” (p. 119) “Nagarjuna” (p. 121); “Maimonides” (p. 122) or Wollstonecraft (p. 123) are presented in the Ontario Curriculum side-by-side with traditional Western Philosophers such as Plato, Descartes or Rousseau.

The Ontario Curriculum’s emphasis on diversity is clear not only as an explicit recommendation in the course’s expectations and in the mention of authors and traditions which fall outside the Western canon, but also in its inclusion of questions such as “What obligations, if any, do humans living in the present have to redress racial or gender inequalities inherited from the past?” (Ontario HSP Curriculum Guidelines, 2003, p. as well as religion, race, and regions of the world. Where possible, students should explore answers to the big questions of philosophy by examining the works of women as well as men, philosophies from the east and the west, and philosophies from diverse religious vantage points. As well, interdisciplinary considerations must be made to meet the expectations and to ensure optimal interest for students. Students should be encouraged to explore many of the questions raised through a variety of mediums including contemporary music, film, literature, and art.” (CP11Public, 2001, p. 3, cf. CP12Public, 2002, p. 2)
This drives home the point that the goal of looking at social difference is not diversity for diversity’s own sake. Rather, the point is to locate and minimize sources of oppression.

**HSP and Oppression**

Looking at social difference is not an end in itself, but a means in the fight against oppression, which, as I discussed in chapter 1, Young defines as:

>[S]ystematic institutional processes which prevent some people from learning and using satisfying and expansive skills in socially recognized settings, or institutionalized social processes which inhibit people’s ability to play and communicate with others or to express their feelings and perspective on social life in contexts where others can listen. (Young, 1990, p. 38)

Oppression, by Young’s definition, is a structural condition of social groups and not simply of individuals (Young, 1990, chap. 2). To merely see everyone as equally different, in this view, is to subscribe to the logic of identity, which is atomistic and in which homogeneity is the aim: all are equally different. More importantly, to see everyone as equally different is to ignore ways in which “some are more equal than others.” In other words, to content oneself with seeing everyone as equally different is to turn a blind eye to ways in which some groups are privileged while others are oppressed.

As I argued before, liberal philosophers and political theorists often see the individual as main unit in their theories, thus assuming social atomism. Recent

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170 The issue of diversity and inclusiveness was already prominent in the OAC Curriculum Guidelines: “There shall be readings in this unit, and they shall be drawn from more than one historical period and more than one philosophical tradition – for example, African, Asian, European, First Nations, Latin American. In addition to investigating fundamental questions that have concerned philosophers for millennia, students should also examine issues that are relatively unexplored. At appropriate points, students will consider how philosophical inquiry is enriched by including consideration of gender and culture and impoverished by omitting discussion of these topics. Throughout, critical-thinking skills shall be taught as part of the exercise of reading, discussing, and writing.” (OAC, 1994, “Course Content”)
critiques of this individualist framework have arisen in recent years (cf. Young, 1990, ch. 8; Mayo, 2004). In philosophy education, this attempt is well represented by the different P4C initiatives and UNESCO’s “Philosophy for All” program. In these initiatives, one can see the individualist ideal replaced by an ideal of community.

In her “Relations Are Difficult,” for instance, Cris Mayo points out that to prevent dominant students from opting out of antibias programs (since they tend to be resistant to these programs), “some multicultural and antibias educators have attempted to make the classroom a place apart from the world of social fractures” (Mayo, 2004, p. 121). Mayo’s thesis in this article, however, is that “attempts to make relationships less difficult do a disservice to the abilities of students to thrash out the challenges that they face in a world rife with inequalities” (Mayo, 2004, p. 121). This approach treats everyone as equally different. However, even this temptation of seeing everyone as “equally different” is an expression of the logic of identity and homogeneity. Mayo describes this problem well:

By now I have been to at least half a dozen diversity training sessions where participants were invited to each get up on a stool and tell their family story. One person might come from a working-class Italian background, another from a middle-class African American background, and so on. The impetus behind this exercise is partially to remind all people that their identities are marked because people in the majority categories may too often consider themselves the universal subject. In the end, the objective always seems to be that we all have complicated lives and would do well to realize that of each other. While this is doubtless a start, understanding that some of us complicate the lives of others differently would help to raise the relational stakes of this exercise. Diversity workshop participants are encouraged to take seriously the role of social positioning in the constitution of their subjectivity, but this

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171 “This individualist ontology usually goes together with a normative conception of the self as independent. The authentic self is autonomous, unified, free, and self-made, standing apart from history and affiliations, choosing its life plan entirely for itself. One of the main contributions of poststructuralist philosophy has been to expose as illusory this metaphysic of a unified self-making subjectivity, which posits the subject as an autonomous origin or an underlying substance to which attributes of gender, nationality, family role, intellectual disposition, and so on might attach.” (Young, 1990, p. 45)
process tends to reinstall uninterrogated identity categories and neglect the power relations between identity categories. (Mayo, 2004, p. 129).

P4C’s community of inquiry, for example, emphasizes the importance of thinking collaboratively as a group, as a way of building community (cf. Cevallos-Estarellas & Sigurdardotti, 2000). The problem, as Young points out, is that the ideal of community too follows the logic of identity, with all of its oppressive characteristics. (Young, 1990, ch. 8). Admittedly, the issue of cultural imperialism does appear in the P4C literature. However, there is very little in the P4C literature on the issue of gender, and even less on the issue of class and other kinds of what Young calls “structural” difference. Even the issue of gender itself has mostly a celebratory flavour reminiscent of first-wave feminism. Very few authors have tackled the gender issue head on and made the argument that feminists need to take P4C seriously and critically. There is still for the most part a heavily cognitive aspect to P4C, valuing reason over emotion, mind over body, which has, as I mentioned, potentially oppressive consequences (notable exceptions being MacColl, 1994; Field, 1997; Valentino, 1998; Collins, 2001).

Although many would dispute the importance Young attributes to difference, her claim that “democracy means political equality” (Young, 2002, p. 23, cf. p. 6) is relatively uncontroversial. But if one accepts that political equality means “Not only should all those affected be nominally included in decision-making, but they should be

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172 “By conflating all identity as difference, then, we open the possibility that students will assert that being German is necessarily equivalent to being Latina. All difference becomes exchangeable without an understanding of social and political forces; all differences are identifies as having (false) family resemblances and thus bring students into what they take as closer understanding of themselves and others.” (Mayo, 2004, p. 129).

173 “Would you wish on young women or small girls a practice of philosophy which you yourself have come to see as deeply imbued with disguised, gendered associations, which are, if not wrong, at least not appropriate for everyone? (…) Just because women may have been denied access to Philosophy in the past one way or another, is not necessarily a reason for greater access now, if Philosophy is of dubious value for girls.” (MacColl, 1994, p. 6)
included on equal terms” (p. 23), then one is also likely to accept the following relatively uncontroversial corollaries:

1) All ought to have an equal right and effective opportunity to express their interests and concerns.

2) All also ought to have equal effective opportunity to question one another, and to respond to and criticize one another’s proposals and arguments.

3) None of them is in a position to coerce or threaten others into accepting certain proposals or outcomes. (Young, 2002, p. 23)

Now, in a situation of initial social and political equality, these three conditions would automatically be met in any collective deliberation, such as a philosophy classroom. But students do not come to the classroom in a situation of social and political equality. First, there is the teacher, who is inherently in a position of power in that scenario. But even (and specially) if the teacher were not there, among the students themselves there is deep inequality which will usually preclude equal democratic participation of all.

At work here is the distinction Young draws between “external” and “internal” inclusion. Women were simply not allowed to receive a liberal education; black people in the Americas were not always allowed to vote: these are examples of external exclusion. But this type of exclusion is not necessarily so explicit: for instance, one can be “allowed” to receive an education, or to run for office, but not have the financial wherewithal to do it.174 This type of external exclusion is more subtle, often not being

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174 “Inequalities of power and resources frequently lead to outcomes such as these, where some citizens with formally equal rights to participate nevertheless have little or no real access to the fora and procedures
noticed by those with exclusive privileges. Nevertheless, it still has received more attention than what Young calls “internal exclusion:” situations in which, even after having obtained access, “people lack effective opportunity to influence the thinking of others” (Young, 2002, p. 55).

The first step in addressing oppression in the HSP context, therefore, is identifying different strands of social difference, in such a way to identify not only sources of external exclusion, but also of internal exclusion. One of many ways to do this is to break social difference into two levels: that of intergroup difference, and that of intragroup difference. Awareness and acknowledgement of social difference at both intergroup and intragroup levels allow the philosophy educator to identify ways in which materials and methods could be adapted in such a way that difference be positively affirmed in such a way as to counteract oppression in the HSP classroom.

To think of intergroup difference is to consider how one particular group of students is located relative to other groups. One way to identify intergroup difference is to identify main points of relative homogeneity within the group. For instance, is this a single-sex school, as opposed to co-ed? (Lim, 2006) Are the students from relatively low through which they might influence decisions. External exclusions of this sort occur in all existing democracies. When political outcomes demonstrably result from an exclusive process, where those with greater power or wealth are able to dominate the process, then from the point of view of democratic norms that outcome is illegitimate.” (Young, 2002, p. 54)

175 “The relative inaccessibility of otherwise public discussions and decision-making processes often results from unconscious bias and thoughtlessness on the part of the designers of such processes, but is no less exclusive on that account.” (Young, 2002, p. 54)

176 “Having obtained a presence in the public, citizens sometimes find that those still more powerful in the process exercise, often unconsciously, a new form of exclusion: others ignore or dismiss or patronize their statements and expressions. Though formally included in a forum or process, people may find that their claims are not taken seriously and may believe that they are not treated with equal respect. The dominant mood may find their ideas or modes of expression silly or simple, and not worthy of consideration. They may find that their experiences as relevant to the issues under discussion are so different from others” in the public that their views are discounted.” (Young, 2002, p. 55)

As Mills puts it: “In many cases reports will not even be forthcoming, since members of subordinate groups may judge it imprudent, given the power relations involved, to give an honest account of how they feel about things.” (Mills, 1998, p. 399)
income families (Thomson, 1971; Fay, 1974; Gehrett, 2000), or relatively high income families? (Lim, 2006) Are the students mainly visible minorities (Thomson, 1971; Fay, 1974; Gehrett, 2000;), or mainly white? Do the students share a specific type of disability (Simon 1979; Geisser, 1993; Lukey, 2004) or are they for the most part “able”? Are they incarcerated (Lee, 1986), or in any other specific setting? This exercise allows the philosophy educator to ask the question who is included, who is not. In other words, this exercise allows the philosophy educator to identify what Young calls sources of external exclusion (Young, 2002, pp. 54-55), and what Debra Shogan calls, following Derrida, “philosophy of the limit” (Shogan, 1995, p. 171).

Having identified elements of group specificity, the philosophy educator can then look at how this group as thus defined experience oppression or privilege. What are their experiences of exploitation, marginalization, cultural imperialism, powerlessness, violence? These questions allow the philosophy educator to identify ways in which materials and methods can be adapted so as to positively affirm social difference (Cf. Thomson, 1971; Gehrett, 2000; Lee, 1986; Ontario, 1994, 2001, 2002).

But as important as identifying sources of intergroup difference is to identify sources of intragroup difference, or what Young calls “internal sources of exclusion” (Young, 2002, pp. 53-55). In other words, a PoM educator must identify not only how her group of students are socially located relative to other groups of people (e.g., college students, or HS students of a different racial or socio-economic background), but must also make an effort to identify how the role of social difference works within her

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177 “Is an argument for conversation, celebration, and security dependent on not noticing that there are some who must necessarily remain outside or beyond this call? Does this particular argument rely on exclusions in order for the argument to be sustained? Might conversation, celebration, and security for some depend upon not noticing the absences of others?” (Shogan, 1995, p. 171)
classroom. While intergroup difference looks at sources of homogeneity and similarity within the group, intragroup difference identifies sources of heterogeneity within the group. For example, are there a variety of ethnicities or social classes in the classroom or in the region (Thomson, 1971; Gehrett, 2000)? Are there boys as well as girls in the classroom? Are there bullies in the classroom (Lee, 1986)? Are there religious minorities in the classroom or in the region? Are there students with different learning abilities or physical abilities in the classroom? Are there students that may, for whatever reason (religion, gender, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation), feel coerced or inhibited by other students or by the teacher? (Lee, 1986). Awareness and acknowledgement of intragroup tension again allows the PoM educator to adapt materials, methods and means of evaluation so as to value social difference within the classroom, in such a way that all different groups of students may express themselves in a context where others will listen (Young, 1990, p. 38).

A good example of attention to how both levels of difference affect “students abilities to express themselves” in a HSP classroom is Christine Gehrett’s “Doing Philosophy in High School: One Teacher’s Account” (2000). In this article, Christine Gehrett narrates her experience teaching philosophy in an isolated underprivileged school in Hawaii, where students were not only not academic, but often came from families who were highly suspicious, if not resentful of formal education.

Gehrett’s article is noteworthy in many ways. First, it strengthens the thesis that philosophy can be beneficial to adolescents who, far from being considered “gifted,” face instead significant challenges in getting an academic education.\textsuperscript{178} In order for these

\textsuperscript{178} For other accounts of doing philosophy with underprivileged students, see also Sawyer (1972) and Zahorchak (1977).
benefits to come about, however, course materials, teaching methods and even measures of evaluations had to be adapted in order to adjust to the students’ realities. Gehrett’s course, for example, started with Lipman’s novel *Lisa*, but it had to be abandoned, because the characters and the stories were “too unrealistic and disconnected from the world that they experienced” (Gehrett, 2000, p. 30). Gehrett eventually started to write her own stories to use in her class, intercalating Aristotelian logic with ethical problems that were part of the students’ lives.

A second way in which Gehrett’s study is noteworthy is in how it highlights intragroup differences, particularly the differences in expression between the different ethnic groups in the classroom:

Philosophical dialogue, or rather verbal communication itself is difficult for students who have not practiced it through their school years, as was the case with most of my philosophy students. Added to this is the issue of cultural habits of communication. Hawaiians are traditionally people of few words. However, their body language is well developed and subtle: a slight nod of the head or raised eyebrow carries much meaning. (…) I had observed daily that the Caucasian students participated the most outwardly: in speaking and in large gesture. But these forms of communication did not necessarily convey more meaning than the subtler forms preferred by my Hawaiian students. (Gehrett, 2000, p. 34)

Gehrett’s experience is a good example of PoM in practice. It is significant at the intergroup level for the way that she detects the specificities of her own group and makes the appropriate adjustments to the materials. At the intragroup level, it is significant for the way that Gehrett takes into account the different styles of learning and of expressing among the different groups of students in the class. Not only are previously excluded

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179 “The students were put off by the way the characters in the book interacted with their parents and their peers. It was not that the novel was poorly written; my students simply felt that it was too contrived and implausible – too unrealistic and disconnected from the world that they experienced.” (Gehrett, 2000, p. 30) Gehrett thus argues that “more effort needs to be directed to up-dating and localizing the North American P4C materials in order to promote a functional level of student interest and to prevent distraction from the content because of the delivery” (Gehrett, 2000, p. 34).
groups now included, but also their attributes are valued and represented in the materials and evaluations used in the class. This helps counteract both the problem of alienation and that of oppression, especially cultural imperialism, marginalization and powerlessness.

The point of what I am calling PoM is not to promote diversity for diversity’s own sake. Rather, it is to identify ways in which a logic of identity reinforces oppression in the HSP classroom and suggest ways in which it can be minimized and counteracted. One such way is through Young’s distinction between autonomy and empowerment, as I explain in the next section.

**HSP and Empowerment**

Young defines oppression as the negation of self-development (Young, 1990, p. 37). But on the very next page she extends this definition of oppression as the negation of the ability for expressing oneself in contexts where others may listen (Young, 1990, p. 38). By fighting oppression in Young’s sense, one is not fostering self-development in an individualist sense, but rather creating conditions in which different groups may express themselves in contexts where different groups may listen, and in this way develop together. Here is where empowerment differs from autonomy.

Young defines autonomy as follows: “An agent, whether individual or collective, is autonomous to the degree that it has sole and final authority to decide on specific issues and actions and no other agent has the right to interfere” (Young, 1990, p. 249). Defined in this way, autonomy is not something that is desirable for either students or teachers to have, because it leads to individualism and alienation. This at best can result in an
“everything goes” approach; at worst, it can lead to an endorsement of dogmatism and oppression.

Autonomy “emphasizes primarily exclusion, the right to keep others out and to prevent them from interfering in decisions and actions” (p. 251). Empowerment, on the other hand, involves “[p]articipation for an agent in decision making through effective voice and vote.” (p. 251). It thus emphasizes expressing oneself in a context where others will listen. To be empowered, one must not only have the right to speak, but also to have a say: that is, to have one’s position taken seriously into account in shaping the actions of a group.

Self-development and self-determination are not the right to do whatever one wants, first, because that may infringe on other people’s rights, but second, because human beings are social beings and their self-development (or lack thereof) is intricately connected with the self-development (or lack thereof) of others. Self-development and self-determination must therefore be negotiated. They must be relational. This is where empowerment distinguishes itself from autonomy.

Autonomy is an atomistic ideal. It forgets about relations and about how people’s actions affect each other. Empowerment retrieves the importance of relations, that is, how everyone’s rights to voice and vote, to self-development and self-determination shape and are shaped by everyone else’s same rights to voice and vote, to self-development and self-determination. All these rights are equal in value, but potentially different in content. The notion of a homogenous community of shared aims working towards a common good is thus correctly criticized by Young, who suggests instead a community of strangers who share space and resources, but who do not necessarily resemble each other.
Moving from a homogenous concept of community to one that is heterogeneous and that accounts for and values heterogeneity is a key move in Young’s Politics of Difference. Likewise, her distinction between autonomy and empowerment is extremely insightful, because it allows one to navigate through different groups’ rights without isolating them from one another.

An important part of the concept of empowerment is to ask: who is not talking and why are they not talking? Or are they talking but not being heard?

What is at stake in many of these conflicts is not simply freedom of expression and association, but substantively equal opportunity for individuals from marginalized groups to develop and exercise their capacities, and to have meaningful voice in the governance of the institutions whose rules and policies condition their lives. (Young, 2007, p. 82)

Having a say in the direction of a group’s activities is central to the concept of empowerment as defined by Young. Empowerment seeks to create avenues for the different “stake-holders” to express themselves, to be heard, and to have their opinion incorporated in how the group’s activities take place. It seeks to create conditions for expression for differently located students, for teachers, and for the community at large as well. Empowerment thus strongly tackles the powerlessness and marginalization faces of oppression, although it can also have a curbing effect on cultural imperialism, exploitation and violence.

In the HSP context, a good example of empowerment is the Carnegie Experiment, which took place in Chicago in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, although it is more empirical than philosophical. In other words, it talks about implementing HSP, but a philosophical analysis is not part of its scope. Here I offer one such analysis because this is the best illustration I have found of what a Politics of Difference would look like in a
HSP initiative. But the Carnegie Experiment organizers did not necessarily have these concepts in mind: they are, after all, Young’s terms. Even if they had similar terms in mind, to my knowledge they did not make them explicit.

In the same way that Young was not discussing HSP in *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, the Carnegie Experiment organizers were also not discussing political philosophy or social justice. But just as the Carnegie Experiment helps to visualize what Young’s Politics of Difference would look like in a HSP initiative, analysing the Carnegie Experiment in terms of Young’s Politics of Difference helps to strengthen the case for its importance, even though it was conducted twenty years before Young wrote *Justice and the Politics of Difference*.

The first element in empowerment is positive attention to social difference. The Carnegie Experiment is the study to my knowledge which provides the most thorough documentation of the demographics of the different schools in their study and the different materials and methodologies that they tried. “Experiment” is the operative word in this study. At the time, the feasibility questions of “is it possible to have philosophy in high schools?” and “what would it be like?” were highly prominent in the literature. The Carnegie HSP research organizers thus selected two schools in two different neighborhoods in the Chicago area to host their HSP experiment: one in Hyde Park, and one in Highland Park (Thomson, 1971a, p. 45). The goal was to take a sample of schools in Chicago with different levels of achievement, income, ethnicities. There was a strong emphasis on accounting for the specificity of each high school, and in not letting HSP be merely an adaptation of a college philosophy course (Thomson, 1971a, p. 5, p. 93). All these different ways of paying attention to group specificity are part of Young’s notion of
empowerment. The Carnegie Experiment, to my knowledge, never mentions social justice as one of the aims of the study. It is a feasibility study. In this respect, this is an interesting study because the way that they make HSP feasible is precisely by paying attention to social difference.

Empowerment averts positivism in that it entails dynamic work in progress. Likewise, inasmuch as it allows for unique original solutions to be developed, catering to the specificities of each community, it naturally averts sameness. Unlike autonomy, however, these unique solutions are not conceptualized as a right of each individual student, teacher or community to do whatever it wishes. On the contrary, because the concept of group is multiple and cross-cutting, communities too overlap with other communities in a variety of ways, in relations of interdependence. Getting the students to translate Plato in their own words and adapting to their own context, for example, is a way to make those students take ownership of the philosophical concepts they are studying, and in this way it counteracts the positivism typical of the logical of identity that sees philosophy as fixed and immutable. This is a way that the Carnegie Experiment illustrates the concept of empowerment.

The expressive aspect of empowerment can be seen in the Carnegie project in a number of other ways. The experimental nature of the Carnegie project was such that project directors invited suggestions from the community. The project organizers invited the students, the parents and the community at large to answer the questions “What do you think we should include in the curriculum and how should we approach it?” (Thomson, 1971a, pp. 2, 53ff, 68). The bibliography for the courses thus included various suggestions from the community, including selections of Eastern Philosophy,
Malcolm X’s autobiography, the recording of “Being Black in America.” (Thomson, 1971a, p. 29, p. 73). Flexibility and sensitivity to student response was thus highly emphasized (Thomson, 1971a, p. 88).

Another important way in which the Carnegie Project embodies empowerment is in the fact that all instructors were co-researchers in the project. The instructors were encouraged to experiment with their own classes, in both content and pedagogies. One of the advantages in the Carnegie experiment was that all the teachers that they recruited for this experiment had at least a Master’s in Philosophy, which is highly uncommon. Teachers were all free to develop their own course and employ trial and error method (Thomson, 1971a, p. 5, 7, 82). This was a reflection of a concern to take into account the specificities of each school, as well as teachers’ and students’ specific interests (Thomson, 1971a, pp. 29ff., p. 88). But teachers were not on their own: they all had strong team support (an indication of empowerment rather than merely autonomy). The importance of an on-going teacher support and curriculum development is particularly emphasized in the follow-up report by Bosley, written in 1974.\footnote{This study describes a follow-up project funded by the Rockfeller institute, which worked on three main fronts: 1) an exploratory conference (pp. 13, 22-25); 2) a three-week summer institute (pp. 14, 25-27) and 3) in-service programs (p. 16, 27-29).}

Unfortunately, it seems that while it had considerable force in the 1970’s, with the foundation for the Center for High School Philosophy and its Newsletters, and with a follow-up study funded by the Rockfeller foundation, the Carnegie Experiment seems to have faded into oblivion in the 1980’s. Given the literature seems to have retroceded or at the very least stagnated in the last two decades, returning in 2008 to the mere questions of feasibility and desirability (cf. Hand & Winstanley, 2008), it is unfortunate that this and other initiatives like it are not more widely publicized.
Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented my alternative to both the selective and the universal approaches to HSP. This proposal, which I called “Philosophy of Many,” is my adaptation of Young’s Politics of Difference to the teaching of philosophy. As such, it rejects both the positivism of seeing philosophy, epistemology or knowledge as a fixed, abstract entity and the reductionism of reducing everything to unity and sameness. PoM counteracts this reductionism by fostering heterogeneity and multiplicity – that is, by looking at how philosophy can be expanded to include more people, more topics and more approaches. As it does so, it also rejects the positivism of seeing philosophy as a finished product, seeing it instead as a work in progress, located in time and space, with infinite room for change and improvement.

As an adaptation of Young’s Politics of Difference, PoM has three specific characteristics, namely, attention to social difference, to oppression and to the distinction between empowerment and autonomy. The concept of social difference is the first element that differentiates PoM from both the selective and the universal approaches to HSP. As I claimed repeatedly in the previous chapters, a paradigm of sameness dominates the HSP literature. Difference, when it appears, is seen as a deficit, a sad obstacle to be surmounted. PoM sees difference as a resource.

As regards oppression, PoM educator must be cautious lest she falls into two possible traps: one there is the danger of reducing all difference to one, giving primacy to one type of difference over other types of difference. On the other, there is the danger of seeing everyone as “equally different,” which would foster an “everything goes” approach. Both these extremes are expressions of the logic of identity, and both are oppressive. Young’s definition of oppression is helpful here in at least two main ways.
First, it reminds us that the point of a Politics of Difference is not relativism, or diversity for its own sake, but rather social justice. Second, Young’s concept of oppression provides us with a non-reductionist framework, one that accounts for different types of difference and oppression without reducing them all to the same. Since social group identity is multiple and cross-cutting, Young’s concept of social difference helps to identify and provide for different groups of oppressed HSP students.

Finally, the distinction between autonomy and empowerment is important for PoM at least the three following reasons: first, it provides a change of focus of philosophy education from the alienating concept of autonomy to empowerment. Second, the distinction between autonomy and empowerment provides the PoM educator with a theoretical framework with which to navigate the different types of difference, with proper provisions to counteract different types of oppression. Finally, the distinction between autonomy and empowerment provides normative guidelines which not only make room for teacher “autonomy” but that also fosters her “empowerment.” The next chapter concludes this study and presents suggestions for further research.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

I believe that group differentiation is both an inevitable and a desirable aspect of modern social processes. Social justice (...) requires not the melting away of differences, but institutions that promote reproduction and respect for group differences without oppression. (Young, 1990, p. 47)

As we start a new millennium, the conviction that exclusionary practices need to be fought at all levels of society is becoming gradually more accepted. Nevertheless, as I showed in this thesis, many if not most researchers on HSP operate from what Young calls a logic of identity, which continues to be exclusionary even when it attempts to reach “all.” My objective in this thesis, therefore, was to map out the HSP literature in terms of Young’s “Politics of Difference,” and through that to suggest ways in which it could be more inclusive. I called this proposal “Philosophy of Many” (“PoM”), as a contrast to both a “Philosophy of Few” (i.e., a selective approach to HSP) and to “Philosophy for All” approach (i.e., a universal approach to philosophy).

This adaptation of Young’s Politics of Difference to HSP was presented in this thesis in six chapters. In chapter 1, I summarized the main aspects of Young’s Politics of Difference, highlighting those which would be more useful to my analysis of HSP. Young’s main criticism of traditional Western political philosophy is that it follows a logic of identity. This logic has two main characteristics: a positivist tendency to see social structures as immutable and a reductionist tendency towards unity and sameness. By showing that most of the philosophical literature on HSP follows the same pattern of thinking that Young criticized in traditional Western political philosophy, I argued that HSP would likewise benefit from adopting a Youngean solution. The goal of this thesis, therefore, was to sketch what this solution would be like.
In chapter 2, I gave an overview of the current literature on HSP, showing that it is scarce and scattered. This thesis’s first contribution, therefore, is as a representative, though not exhaustive, catalogue of the HSP literature. Although I do not consider this the most important contribution this thesis makes, it is definitely a strong contribution. It is step towards advancing the conversation on HSP research, in that it helps to break the circle of constantly “reinventing the wheel.” Although it is likely that there are sources on HSP that I have not been able to detect, it is also true that some of the sources I did find were difficult to find, or were found “by chance.” I believe that the list that I compiled is helpful, therefore, as a starting point and not as a finishing line.

I was as extensive and inclusive in my literature as I could be. Part of the reason for this was that I was constantly unsatisfied with how little I found on the topic of HSP. This led me to continue searching, thinking that maybe I was looking it the wrong places. Admittedly, it may well be that I was looking at the wrong places and that there is a pocket of literature on HSP and inclusion out there that I have not tapped. But if this is the case – and it probably is – my point still holds that such a pocket is not as publicized as it should be. To even talk about a pocket is problematic, since it already implies isolation and even stagnation, when what we need is an open stream.

In chapter 3, I present a deeper analysis of the HSP literature, dividing it into two main strands, “the selective” and the “universal” approaches to HSP. The selective approach considered many objections to HSP, and thus recommended that it only be offered selectively, to those HS students considered highly accomplished. With the emergence of Philosophy for Children (P4C), on the other hand, the ideal of “Philosophy for All” – which postulates that everyone can and should do philosophy – became
increasing more widespread. Within this approach, objections against HSP are rarely raised, and when they are, they tend to be framed in terms of younger children and not adolescents. I also argued in this chapter that both these approaches are problematic, because they exclude many, privileges some over others and alienate all. Although one may disagree with the way in which I divided the literature, the distinction I traced between the selective and the universal approaches to HSP nevertheless helps to map the territory. And if I am correct that both approaches to HSP must be replaced, identifying them and naming their characteristics is an important first step.

In chapter 4, I present a brief analysis of the epistemology informing both the selective and the universal approaches to HSP. In this chapter, I focus on the so-called “Myth of Neutrality,” which is another manifestation of the logic of identity. In epistemology, it portrays entities such as knowledge, education and philosophy as fixed, abstract and neutral entities, instead of dynamic works in progress. Using as illustration the works of two authors, Robert Simon and Harvey Siegel, I showed in this chapter how the myth of neutrality manifests the positivism and reductionism typical of the logic of identity. Because the theories informing HSP are, like Simon’s and Siegel’s work, manifestations of the myth of neutrality, which Young criticizes, there too we see the logic of identity with all the characteristics and injustices to which it gives rise. I therefore proposed an approach to HSP that has as guiding framework not a logic of identity, but a logic of difference.

Finally, in chapter 5 I present my positive proposal for HSP, which I called “Philosophy of Many” (PoM), as a more inclusive alternative to both the selective and the universal approaches to HSP. PoM has three main characteristics: 1) positive
attention to social difference; 2) deliberate and systematic rejection of oppression and 3) emphasis on empowerment over autonomy. These three pillars together allow PoM to counteract both the positivism and the reductionism identified in the previous chapters.

The logic of identity is subtractive because sameness is subtractive: either you have it, or you fall short of it, and since you never have it, you are always falling short. The logic of identity is also divisive: it is a zero-sum, either-or approach. The beauty of an approach that values heterogeneity is additive. It multiplies possibility. It does not think of the glass as either full or not, but rather, it thinks of ways in which it can overflow at a higher and higher rate. This suggestion of looking at difference as a resource rather than deviance expands the possibilities in the ways of looking at high school students as philosophers in a ways that are multiple and additive, instead of subtractive and divisive.
Suggestions for Further Study

A first suggestion for further studies would be a research on empirical effects of HSP on adolescents. Justifications for HSP often include claims such as improvement in critical thinking and other reasoning skills, but there is little empirical evidence to support any such claims.

A related study would be to examine the possibility of considering adolescents as a social group in Young’s sense. Using findings from developmental psychology, I believe a strong case could be made for considering adolescents a social group. Given the particular qualities adolescents as a group might have, psychologically, physically and socially, I believe that a robust characterization of adolescents as a social group could make the case for HSP much stronger.

Finally, in her 2002 book called Inclusion and Democracy, Young builds on her argument in Justice and the Politics of Difference (1990), developing in more detail how participatory democracy needs a more detailed account of inclusion. Given that a lot of the justifications for Philosophy in Schools (at all levels) gravitate around philosophy’s role in a democratic education, I would suggest a study that used Young’s Inclusion and Democracy (2002) as framework to analyze these various claims about pre-college philosophy and democracy.
References


