

PHILOSOPHY PLAYS: A NEO-SOCRATIC MODEL FOR TEACHING ETHICS

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Thus all our dignity consists in thought. It is on thought that we must depend for our recovery, not on space and time, which we can never fill. Let us then strive to think well; that is the basic principle of morality.¹

The Philosophy Plays project was conceived and founded by Edward Spence in 1997 for the primary aim of taking philosophy out of the intellectually-constraining spaces of university classrooms and professional conferences and into the liberating spaces of the public agora, as Socrates did 2,500 years ago. It was a way of, once again, rendering philosophy relevant and resonant to the common and shared concerns and interests of the citizenry of the modern *polis*.

There have been eight annual series since 1997, each series comprising six to thirteen fortnightly sessions, most of which are repeated two or three times according to popular demand. Each series is organized around a generic theme. To date, the themes, chosen by Edward Spence, have been as follows: “Love, the Good, Knowledge and Friendship” in 1997, six sessions on mainly Greek philosophy; “Visions of Immortality, God, Body and Soul” in 1998, ten sessions on the exploration of the connections and continuity between Greek and Modern philosophy; “Philosophy East and West” and “Zen and Zeno” in 1999, thirteen sessions on the exploration of the connections between Eastern and Western philosophy; “Olympics of the Mind” in 2000, nine sessions on the celebration of philosophical thought during the Sydney Olympics; and “Philosophy as the Art of Living” in 2001 and 2002, nine sessions on the exploration of how philosophy conceived as practical wisdom can guide us in living better and happier lives; “Thought for Food” in 2003, on various aspects of moral philosophy and applied ethics from Plato to the present; and “Olympians of the Mind” a tribute to philosophy, comprising six sessions

on Ancient Greek Philosophy to coincide with the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens.

The Philosophy Plays are performed fortnightly at a Greek restaurant, *Steki*, in the inner-west suburb of Newtown in Sydney, Australia, an inner-city suburb not unlike Soho in New York, vibrant and cosmopolitan. The philosophers are from various universities from around Australia, the Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics (CAPPE),² and visiting philosophers from the USA and Europe.

Philosophy Plays have also been presented and performed at various national and international arts and cultural festivals in Australia, including the 1999 Greek Festival of Sydney (*Socrates in Love*), the 2000 Sydney Fringe Festival (*The Philosophy of Happiness*), the 2002 Adelaide Fringe Festival in South Australia (*The Philosophy of Happiness*), the 2003 Greek Festival of Sydney (*Plato, Power and the Ring of Corruption*), and for the 2004 Adelaide Fringe Festival and the Greek Festival of Sydney (the *Philosophy of Love* based on Plato's *Symposium*). The *Philosophy of Love* presentations for the two Festivals were accompanied by performances of an original play *The Philosophy of Love: Love in the Age of Terror*, written by Edward Spence specifically for those two events. For the 2004 Greek Festival of Sydney, the venue for the philosophy presentation and performance of the play was the Sydney Opera House. For the Adelaide Fringe Festival, the venue for the presentations was Coriole Vineyards in McLaren Vale. This, I believe, is an indication of the versatility of the Philosophy Plays which have been performed in restaurants, taverns, theatre spaces, vineyards, pubs, and the Sydney Opera House. The immediate object of this paper is to demonstrate the additional versatility of the philosophy plays in providing a basis for an effective method for teaching professional ethics to university students.

THE OBJECTIVE AND STRUCTURE OF THE PHILOSOPHY PLAYS

The primary object of the Philosophy Plays is to introduce philosophy to local communities and the general public through philosophical presentations by professional philosophers incorporating drama. To this end, the Philosophy Plays aim at making philosophy, and especially Western philosophy, more accessible to the general public. As a large number of people do not have the time or the resources to study philosophy at universities and other tertiary institutions, the Philosophy Plays provide a means of rendering philosophy accessible to people who would otherwise not have access to it.

The Philosophy Plays are usually performed at a restaurant in the form and style of a Platonic symposium. They comprise four interrelated components:

1. A 20-minute talk by a professional philosopher;
2. A play performed by actors that dramatically illustrates some of the ideas in the philosophical talk;
3. Audience participation through discussion of the presentation and performance;
4. A banquet of food and wine served to the audience and the participants.

The drama component in the Philosophy Plays is either adapted from existing plays or philosophical dialogues or created and written specifically by the philosopher presenters themselves.

The Philosophy Plays, like Platonic dialogues, seek to engage their audiences both dialectically (primarily through the philosophical talk) and emotionally (primarily through the drama). The restaurant setting provides a popular and relaxed forum where people from different backgrounds and different levels of philosophical sophistication can come together to discuss various philosophical issues. This is the setting familiar in Plato's *Symposium* and it is the setting that inspired the structure of the philosophy play presentations. The banquet and the wine are grist to the mill of philosophical discussion. They create a convivial atmosphere where the audience and the performers come together in friendship, as in Plato's *Symposium*, to engage actively in a liberating and lively philosophical exchange. Interestingly, the word "restaurant" is derived from the word "restore". One could say that doing philosophy in a restaurant restores both the mind and the body through providing food for thought. In combination, the philosophy presentation, the banquet of food and wine, as well as the dramatic performance can, when presented and performed successfully, engage the public audience both intellectually and emotionally.

The Philosophy Plays always aim to be at once entertaining and informative, but most importantly, transformative. For it is only through a personal and authentic transformation that philosophy as the examined life can be conceived as practical wisdom and become a way of life, a "βίου τέχνη" or art of life, that leads to a flourishing and fulfilling life.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL RATIONALE OF THE PHILOSOPHY PLAYS AS A METHOD FOR TEACHING PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

According to the quotation from Pascal above, “all our dignity consists in thought. It is on thought that we must depend for our recovery, not on space and time, which we can never fill. Let us then strive to think well; that is the basic principle of morality.”

Pascal also said, however, that “the heart has its own reasons”. I extend the metaphor by adding that reason has its own passion. The Philosophy Plays are an attempt to bring together reason and passion, the cognitive and the affective, the intellect and the emotions, through the combined mediums of philosophy and drama. As disciplines and practices involving conflict — in philosophy, the conflict of abstract ideas and arguments; in drama, the conflict of characters — philosophy and drama are ideal and well-suited partners in a marriage of theory and practice. The purpose for the designed fusion of reason and passion, intellect and the emotions, is that rational choice in decision-making, including ethical decision-making, requires it.

Two over-arching necessary conditions for rational choice in decision-making are (a) justification and (b) motivation. Though necessary, these may not always be sufficient conditions, as external compliance through an outside agency may also be required in cases where one is both rationally convinced that there is justification for doing something and, moreover, motivated to act on his justified conviction, but fails to do so because of weakness of the will or some other reason such as addiction, for example.

Justification

Justification is intended to provide convincing if not conclusive rational reasons for selecting one course of action rather than another. In ethics, for example, these are conclusive or at least convincing reasons why one should act morally when one has alternative choice(s) for not acting morally or for acting immorally.

Motivation

Justified reasons alone, however, are not sufficient to guide rational and moral action. That is because rational action, and moral action specifically, requires that the rational reasons of justification must also be motivating reasons. For if justificatory reasons are not motivating reasons they can't be practical, and if they can't be practical they are not action-

guiding and hence cannot play a role in the decision-making process. Thus, the decision-making process requires reasons for action that are at once justificatory and motivating.

A crucial point with regard to motivation, however, is that justificatory reasons need only be capable of motivating action. They need not and cannot also be expected to motivate action, or bring about compliance, in every single instance. For consider the psychopath or the sociopath who, though given adequate justificatory and motivating reasons for acting morally is, due to his dysfunctional psychological condition, unable to be guided by practical reason. In such cases, the fault lies not with reason but with the psychopath's or sociopath's dysfunctional psychology. In more ordinary situations persons may also, for various contingent reasons, choose not to follow the justified requirements of moral rationality, even when recognizing that they have adequate justificatory and in principle motivating reasons for doing so. A possible response from such a person may be "Yes, I know I have got to do the right thing, but I am not going to, because I just can't be bothered!" In short, although capable of motivating action in normal rational agents, motivating justificatory reasons may nevertheless fail in some instances to motivate particular agents into moral action who, though recognizing the authority of reason for moral action, in those instances may nevertheless choose to act contrary to those requirements.

In sum, justificatory reasons will count as motivating and thus practical and action-guiding if they are *capable* of motivating a normal rational person to act in a certain way, including, a moral way.

I define a 'normal rational' person as one who is capable of minimally understanding and performing inductive and deductive reasoning: with regard to inductive reasoning, the requirement that the normal rational person is capable of learning from experience; with regard to deductive reasoning, the requirement that a normal rational person is able to recognize and understand the implications of the principle of non-contradiction — namely, the logical requirement that one does not assert "A" and "not A" (a putative assertion and its corresponding negation) at the same time and in the same respect; for example, the assertion that "Canberra is the capital of Australia" and the corresponding contradictory assertion, "Canberra is not the capital of Australia".

With regard to the Philosophy Plays as a method for teaching professional ethics, *justification* will primarily appeal to the *intellect* aroused dialectically with learning mediated through *philosophical arguments* designed to provide justificatory reasons for action in decision-making, including

ethical decision-making; *motivation*, on the other hand, will primarily appeal to *feelings* and *emotions* aroused rhetorically with learning mediated through the *dramatic plays*.

The decision-making model as described above that comprises both justification and motivation and corresponds respectively to philosophical arguments and dramatic plays consists of two main levels: the *theoretical* and the *practical*. Since the discussion that follows will exclusively address the use of philosophy plays as a method for teaching professional ethics to university students, the decision-making model referred to from henceforth will be an ethical decision-making model; a model designed to provide both justificatory and motivating reasons for thinking and acting ethically both within and outside the various professions for which the relevant cohorts of students receive their training and education.

The theoretical level comprises, in turn, two sub-levels: the *meta-ethical* and the *normative*. The practical level, in turn, comprises three levels: the *meta-motivational*, the *relevant-contextual*, and the *motivational*.

The Theoretical Level

The meta-ethical level

At this initial and highest theoretical level, the ethical enquiry seeks to determine through a critical and interactive dialogue with the students (dialectic) what legitimate authority, if any, morality exercises or at least ought to exercise over us. I refer to this question as *the authoritative question of morality*:³ the question of “Why be moral?” The authoritative question of morality seeks in effect to determine if there are any rational reasons for thinking and acting morally that are justificatory and motivating, capable at least of motivating moral action through the agent’s own rational internal compliance.

This is the most crucial level in the dialectical ethical enquiry since the students are invited to doubt and feel challenged in thinking for themselves if there are indeed any good *internal reasons* for thinking and acting morally. Internal reasons for ethical action are justificatory and motivational reasons for action that appeal primarily, if not exclusively, to the agent’s subjective rational perspective. That is to say, internal reasons for ethical action are reasons that appeal primarily if not exclusively to the authority that morality has over a rational individual in its own right without any further reference or appeal to other external legal, social, religious, or familial edicts, rules, commandments or other external reasons for ethical action.

To be sure, there might indeed be instrumental reasons (means-end reasons) for acting morally even when one is not rationally convinced that there are authoritative internal reasons for doing so. Such instrumental reason may have nothing or very little to do with the authority of morality to prescribe moral conduct. Such reasons might be those of self-preservation, emanating from fear or anxiety of being caught and punished by others or the state for one's moral transgressions. Thus a person might abstain from shoplifting not out of any rational conviction that shoplifting is morally wrong but out of fear of being caught and sent to prison.

What if, however, in the absence of authoritative and convincing internal reasons for moral conduct, one could act immorally at will without fear or anxiety of ever being caught and punished by others or the state? In other words, what if one could act immorally with total impunity? Would there be any reason, under these circumstances, for acting morally, especially if one was convinced, under our hypothetical scenario, that there were no internal reasons and certainly no instrumental reasons, for doing so? One could indeed be considered irrational or even mad to act morally under this scenario, especially if acting morally went against one's self-interest. This is more or less what Glaukon tells Socrates in Plato's dialogue the *Republic*, after relating to Socrates the "Myth of Gyges". Myths are an effective and engaging rhetorical device used by Plato throughout his dialogues to dramatically illustrate and reinforce the dialectical arguments for and against in a given discussion or debate. It is precisely for this reason that the Myth of Gyges is used in the initial dialectical enquiry with the students at this meta-ethical level: to engage the students rhetorically so as to challenge them and help them understand and appreciate the problem posed by Plato's Myth of Gyges for the authority of morality. This initial stage of the Socratic dialectical enquiry (*elenchus*) is designed to induce in the students a state of Socratic *aporia* or doubt, followed by a state of anticipation for further enquiry to discover the solution, if any, to the problem of the authoritative question of morality, "Why be moral?"

The normative level

It is precisely at this point when the students' intellectual curiosity is aroused and their imagination fired by the question posed by the Myth of Gyges, "Why be moral?" that contemporary normative theories of ethics are introduced as possible solutions to the authoritative question of morality. Such theories include Contractarian Theories such as those of

Thomas Hobbes and John Rawls, Utilitarian Theories, Virtue-Centered Theories, and Rights-Centered Theories such as that of Alan Gewirth.⁴ Apart from functioning as a dramatic and heuristic prop for examining possible solutions to the authoritative question of morality, the authoritative question of morality is also used to provide a comparative evaluative analysis of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the normative ethical theories examined. In analyzing the justificatory and motivational ability of each normative ethical theory to provide an adequate answer to the authoritative question of morality, that is, the ability to offer convincing if not conclusive rational internal reasons for acting morally, students are offered the philosophical opportunity to determine for themselves the relative merits of each ethical theory canvassed. This dialectical stage in the Socratic *elenchus* enhances the student's learning experience and helps consolidate both their meta-ethical and normative ethical understanding. The teacher, through the use of the Myth of Gyges as a pedagogical tool, functions effectively as a Socratic mid-wife, helping the students give birth to their own knowledge and understanding.

The authoritative question of morality, framed within the Myth of Gyges, also functions to reveal to the students the importance of the virtues for ethical conduct. For if rules and principles within the theoretical framework of normative ethical theories cannot adequately motivate ethical conduct, even when they provide justificatory reasons for such conduct, the cultivation and inculcation of character virtues such as courage, moderation, prudence and justice (the cardinal virtues) offer an extra motivational boost that may, with habituation, prove adequate for motivating ethical conduct.

The Practical Level

The motivational level

The introduction of the virtues at this point of the dialectical enquiry is crucial in showing that ethics is not merely about the acquisition of theoretical knowledge regarding certain ethical rules and principles embedded within ethical theories but is, more importantly, about ethical practice, both with regard to individual and collective action. As Aristotle points out in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, we study ethics not merely to acquire knowledge about what ethics is, but to learn how we can become ethical persons. Knowing what ethical conduct consists in is not the same as engaging in ethical conduct. As argued earlier, ethical action requires not merely justification for acting ethically but also motivation

for so doing. And the virtues provide the additional motivational power that can, through habituation, translate ethical thought based on intellectual justification and abstract, impersonal, rational motivation, into ethical action based on *personal motivation* through *excellence of character*. The inculcation of the virtues translates theoretical knowledge (knowledge that) into practical knowledge (knowledge how or know how).

The introduction of the virtues as a stage in the dialectical enquiry of the learning process is designed to *form*, and not merely inform, the students with regard to ethics. Insofar as character is motivationally important for ethical conduct, the encouragement offered to students to help them begin to form an ethical character is a crucial aspect of the Socratic *elenchus* in moral education. I will refer to this stage of the Socratic *elenchus* as the *protreptic* (didactic) component of ethical education. Unlike some other academic humanities topics such as literature or geography, for example, where the students who study those subjects are not expected to become writers or explorers, there is by contrast an expectation, or at least a hope, that the students who receive an ethical education will apply it in their own lives and chosen professions. Like the sciences, ethical knowledge includes an important applied and practical component. Unlike other sciences, however, the subject of ethical education and its application is oneself and one's relations to other persons; the object of ethical education is to cultivate in oneself ethical and virtuous pre-dispositions that would enable one to act ethically in most if not all circumstances, especially under difficult conditions that may go against one's short-term self-interest. It is precisely in *exhorting* students through instructive examples by way of case studies, dramatic plays, films, role models and other rhetorical devices that the protreptic component of ethical education becomes essential; as Aristotle reminds us, we study ethics not to know what the good is, but how to become good persons.⁵ This brings us to the relevant-contextual stage of the dialectical learning process.

The relevant-contextual level

The importance of this level cannot be emphasized enough. For it is at this level of the dialectical learning process that the abstract theoretical ideas are rendered concrete and contextualized in relation to the students' own pre-theoretical subjective and inter-subjective experiences. For unless the ethical principles, theories, rules, values, and virtues can be shown to be relevant to both the students' own personal and cultural experiences as well as to their chosen professions, the ethical pedagogy,

that so far incorporates ethical theory, both meta-ethical and normative, and character virtues, will only provide a rational and theoretical motivation for ethical conduct which may not prove adequate by itself in motivating ethical conduct in concrete situations; situations similar to those that students are likely to confront in their personal and professional lives. The relevant contextualization of ethical education is engendered through various rhetorical devices including live performances of dramatic plays, feature films, documentaries, and real-life professional case studies all designed to wed the theoretical ethical pedagogy with the students' own personal and cultural experiences and knowledge, rendering the ethical pedagogy thus contextualized, *a personal transformative and existential experience*, and not simply an informative abstract intellectual exercise.

The relevant-contextual level is thus primarily designed to transform the theoretical motivation discussed above into a more potent affective, visceral and psychological motivation, capable, at least in principle if not in every practical instance, of motivating the students to incorporate ethical conduct in their personal as well as their professional lives. Significantly, note that the philosophy plays format, which combines philosophy with drama, is *context-sensitive*. That is, the content of the dramatic component of the philosophy plays can be adapted to suit the context relevant to the ethical environment under discussion. So, for example, the content of the play *A Perfect Injustice* (see section 4) that is used as a case study to illustrate corruption in the teaching of police ethics, can be adapted to illustrate corruption in teaching business ethics with reference to real-life cases such as Enron or other similar cases. This brings us to a discussion of the most crucial stage of ethical education: the pre-theoretical stage that takes place at the meta-motivational level of the Socratic *elenchus*.

The meta-motivational level

The problem facing the teacher who undertakes to teach professional ethics as a service subject to students who are studying for vocational degrees in journalism, advertising, policing, engineering, and medicine, among others, is that these students do not usually have any background knowledge in philosophy, let alone moral philosophy. The study of professional ethics through moral philosophy as described above is on the whole an entirely new and challenging experience for such students. The problem is not merely to effectively motivate the students to think and act ethically using the theoretical and practical ele-

ments of the pedagogical methodology described under the various levels above; the problem initially is one of establishing an efficient and effective mode of interactive communication between the teacher and the learners — that is, getting the students *to listen* and *be receptive* to the information that is being communicated to them.

The reception of communication of new information by students cannot be taken for granted, especially when it concerns ethical education. That is because the authority of morality itself cannot be taken for granted. It has to be earned through the reception and acceptance of the rational arguments that support that authority through the rational endorsement of morality's authority by each individual student. The final arbiter in the ethical decision-making model discussed under the Neo-Socratic method of ethical pedagogy so far are the students themselves. As final arbiters, students must voluntarily offer their personal internal rational endorsement to the theoretical arguments that support the authority of morality; by contrast, they must not be expected to assent to an involuntary endorsement of morality's authority simply on the basis of some arbitrary authority imposed upon the students externally, including that of the teacher. Unlike legal authority, moral authority must be granted willingly and internally by each rational agent on the basis of valid and sound arguments capable of eliciting the agent's rational assent.

The *problem of reception* that I have outlined above (getting the students to be receptive to the ethical information communicated to them), can be compared to the problem concerning the authority of morality: the question "Why be moral?" is now preceded by the question that can be posed by a putative student, "*Why should I listen to what Plato or other philosophers, both ancient and modern, have to say about morality, especially since they don't speak my language. In any case, what does all this moral philosophy have to do with journalism or the police?*"

The *reception problem* is a problem that concerns not merely moral philosophy but also effective communication. The moral information communicated to students in class must be capable of being communicated to them in a way that speaks their language: it must be relevant to their personal, cultural and professional interests and experiences. The reception problem is also a moral problem, for, unless students can be assisted in becoming receptive to the moral education that is being communicated to them, the teacher will fail to provide effective moral education to those students. So the avoidance to deal with the problem of reception at the meta-motivational level of moral pedagogy is not an option for any teacher who wants to impart to their students an appro-

priate and adequate moral education, sufficient to the students' future professional environment. In short, the teacher has a moral obligation and a duty to address and deal with the reception problem in his or her pedagogy, especially when the pedagogy concerns moral education.

The reception problem confronted initially at the meta-motivational level can of course be addressed and met through the various rhetorical devices referred to above under the practical motivational and relevant-contextual levels. However, it is of the utmost importance to first recognize and acknowledge the reception problem as a meta-motivational problem that has to be addressed and solved through the utilization of effective and efficient rhetorical and proreptic devices that engender successful receptive communication by students at the outset. Insofar as this is also a moral problem, since it concerns the success or failure to provide essential moral education to students adequate to their future professional needs, the reception problem must of necessity be addressed and solved at the very first stage in the dialectical process of ethical pedagogy.

In what follows I will describe, by way of a case study, the use of philosophy plays as an innovative method for addressing and solving the reception problem in teaching professional ethics to undergraduate students at Charles Sturt University in Bathurst, NSW, Australia. Although I have used philosophy plays as a method for teaching not only public philosophy to general community audiences but also various professional ethics subjects, including media ethics and police ethics, I will focus, by way of a case study, on using the philosophy plays methodology to teach police ethics to second year undergraduate students in the Bachelor of Arts degree in Justice Studies (Policing). Upon completion of their BA degree the majority of these students join the NSW Police Academy and subsequently the NSW Police Force to become police constables (police officers).

THE MORAL EDUCATION OF THE GUARDIANS: TEACHING COPS TO BE GOOD

As a way of addressing the reception problem at the meta-motivational level of the Neo-Socratic model of ethical pedagogy, the philosophy plays prove an effective method, for they are *capable* of communicating to students abstract ethical concepts and arguments in a manner that is both accessible and engaging to them.

To introduce the students to the problem of the authoritative question of morality posed by the Myth of Gyges at the initial meta-ethical level of the dialectical enquiry, I co-wrote an original play for that purpose with the assistance of one of my third year BA Communication students at Charles Sturt University, Liam Nesbitt. Although I provided the ethical concepts, structure and arguments in the dramatic dialogue of the play, Liam's choice and use of the vernacular, a language suitable to students of his own age group, rendered the language of the play more immediate, realistic and engaging and thus accessible to the students of my Police Ethics class.

The play, *A Perfect Injustice*⁶, is based on Plato's Myth of Gyges but contextualized in a contemporary police setting in Australia. The two main characters Officer Shepherd and Officer Socrates are two rookies who have just graduated as police constables from the New South Wales Police Academy. On their first day on the job, they come across a mysterious old man who offers them each a ring which when worn on their fingers renders them invisible. Upon this discovery, Socrates decides to use the ring's power of invisibility to apprehend and take into custody criminals caught in the acts of their crimes. He sees the magical ring as a useful tool in the fight against crime and the upholding of law and order; above all, however, Socrates views the ring as an instrument for justice. Shepherd, on the other hand, views his ring as an instrument for corruption that would enable him to become rich quickly. Unlike Socrates, he uses the ring as a means to break the law and commit the worst injustices for his own self-gain, in the secure knowledge that the ring's invisibility affords him complete impunity and escape from any harmful repercussions and punishment.

Shepherd believes, like Glaukon in Plato's *Republic*, that there are no convincing rational reasons for being moral under conditions of perfect injustice. Thus appearing just when you are not, in the sure knowledge that you can act immorally with total impunity, when it is in your self-interest to do so, makes perfect sense to Shepherd. Better still, contrary to the truth, you appear to others as perfectly just and moral. Echoing Glaukon's views in the *Republic*, as far as Shepherd is concerned this is a win-win situation and only a fool will not see it that way.

Socrates, by contrast, believes that it is his moral and professional duty as a police officer to always act morally and uphold justice even if at times this goes against his self-interest. Justice is meant to safeguard the interest of every citizen and not merely his own self-interest.

As a result of Socrates' zeal to apprehend and catch criminals in the act of committing their crimes, under the invisibility of the magical ring, he patrols the city streets at all hours. Like Superman, he keeps his vigilante identity hidden and, apart from Shepherd, no one else knows of his activities in apprehending and bringing criminals to justice. As a result, Socrates is never credited and rewarded for his successful fight against crime. Because of his long absences from home, Socrates' wife leaves him. In addition, because of his time away from the precinct when he is busy catching criminals, the Sergeant in charge suspects Socrates of laziness at best, moonlighting at worst. As a result of those suspicions, Socrates is demoted with a warning of dismissal. Shepherd on the other hand, who uses his time in the office to organize corrupt deals, is rewarded for his industry and promoted.

In the final scene of the play, Shepherd ridicules Socrates for allegiance to justice that has only brought him trouble and ruin and compares that to his own rewarding life of crime. Socrates in turn reminds Shepherd that what he does is morally wrong for it harms others and that is the opposite of what a good police officer ought to be doing. Worse still, Socrates tells Shepherd that by engaging in crime he is ultimately harming himself by corrupting the most valuable thing he possesses, the integrity of his character and his soul. At the end of the play, Socrates' parting words to Shepherd, parallel and echo those of Socrates the philosopher at his trial in Plato's *Apology*, "We go our separate ways, which way is best, God only knows".

The dramatic parts in the play are acted by volunteer police ethics students. This is in keeping with the dialectical and interactive approach of the Neo-Socratic method of teaching described above. The pedagogical advantage of getting students to act the roles of Shepherd, Socrates and the Sergeant, is that students themselves are engaging in the teaching process and moreover, students learn from each other. This, I believe, enhances the learning experience, as students are empowered to take a lead in their own pedagogy. This further reinforces the dialectical and interactive approach to learning that the Neo-Socratic method of teaching encourages and promotes through its structure.

CONCLUSION

The philosophy plays, as illustrated through a discussion of the play *A Perfect Injustice* above, solve conceptually and practically the reception problem of motivation at the meta-motivational level of enquiry, as the

students are approached in a way that they can understand and access through their own cultural language; a cultural language that renders Socrates', and Plato's words generally, more concrete and accessible than it would be possible if those words were merely communicated to the students directly through Plato's dialogues without any contextualized cultural filters. The philosophy plays function as cultural and linguistic filters to render Plato's arguments more resonant and relevant to students who have had no prior exposure to or interest in Plato's philosophy or in philosophy generally.

In addition to demonstrating how the philosophy plays, as illustrated above through the play *A Perfect Injustice*, solve the reception problem at the meta-motivational level of the Neo-Socratic model of teaching, I will summarize in turn how the philosophy plays function at the other levels of the model discussed above.

At the Theoretical Level

The meta-ethical level

Through the play, students are exposed to the authoritative question of morality "Why be moral?" under conditions of perfect injustice in a way that they can understand and find relevant, for it relates directly to their own chosen profession.

The normative level

The authoritative question of morality, as posed through the structure, dialogue, and action of the play, allows the students to carry out a comparative analysis and examine for themselves how adequately the various ethical theories studied in the course answer that question. Because the question involves characters with which the students are engaged, not merely intellectually but also affectively through their individual and collective emotions, an answer to that question becomes more immediate and visceral, no longer a mere academic question, but a question that concerns them personally. The question as posed through the dramatic dialogue in the play not only informs the students but also *forms* them.

At the Practical Level

The motivational level

As illustrated through the analysis of the play *A Perfect Injustice* above, students are encouraged to observe and examine certain virtues or vices

instantiated by the characters in the play. Socrates exhibits virtues of courage, justice, prudence, and integrity through thinking and acting in accordance with his sense of professional duty and moral conscience. He does not merely *believe* in doing what is right, he *does* what is right even when it goes against his personal interests. In the character of Socrates, we see an example of moral belief (theory) transform into moral action (practice). Socrates' integrity is exemplified by the conceptual and practical congruence that exists between his professional duty as a police officer and his moral actions. Shepherd by contrast, exhibits the major vice of injustice. Insofar as he runs the risk of corrupting his own character through his corrupt activities, he also exhibits the vice of imprudence. He sacrifices his long-term wellbeing for temporary and short-term gains. At least, this much can be argued for, on the basis of Platonic and Aristotelian ethics. Shepherd also lacks integrity, since his corrupt actions are incongruent with his professional duty to uphold justice. Moreover, he is a hypocrite, appearing just to others, when he is not. At this level of enquiry, students are encouraged to think for themselves which character best suits the acceptable professional profile of a police officer whose duty is to uphold justice and serve the law. *Protrectually*, the students are encouraged to imagine what it would be like to cultivate and inculcate in themselves the virtues of character essential for a good police officer, as illustrated by the character of Socrates in the play.

The relevant-contextual level

The play helps contextualize the questions and issues examined at all the other levels in the ethical decision-making model described above thus rendering the whole enquiry, at both the theoretical and practical levels of ethical enquiry, resonant and relevant. In addition to offering a solution to the problem of reception addressed at the meta-motivational level, the contextualizing of the whole enquiry, within a philosophy play such as *A Perfect Injustice* that renders the whole ethical enquiry accessible and relevant, offers a sound pedagogical methodology for teaching professional ethics to students who take ethics as a service subject; thus demonstrating both conceptually and practically how the Neo-Socratic Model of Teaching Ethics described and argued for in this paper is capable of being an effective method for teaching professional ethics and ethics generally to students with no background in moral philosophy.

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NOTES

¹ Pascal, *Pensees*. (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1966.) S.200; p.95.

² CAPPE is a Special Commonwealth Research Centre, funded by the Australian Research Council and co-hosted by Charles Sturt University, the University of Melbourne and the Australian National University in Canberra.

³ Alan Gewirth refers to this question as the most fundamental question in morality in his book *Reason and Morality*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

⁴ In the main, his Principle of Generic Consistency (PGC) as expounded in *Reason and Morality* (1978), University of Chicago Press.

⁵ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*.

⁶ The play *A Perfect Injustice*, written by Edward Spence and Liam Nesbitt, was first performed for the 2003 Greek Festival of Sydney at the Sidetrack Theatre in Marrickville, Sydney, in March 2003. The play has subsequently been used to teach Police Ethics (JST 106) to students in the BA Justice Studies (Policing) degree at Charles Sturt University.

