Practical wisdom in the (formerly) 'public' domain: where moral and civic intersect

Helen Haste

This is an unpublished conference paper for the 5th Annual Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues conference at Oriel College, Oxford University, Thursday 5th – Saturday 7th January 2017.
These papers are works in progress and should not be cited without author's prior permission.

Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues
University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT United Kingdom
T: +44 (0) 121 414 3602 F: +44 (0) 121 414 4865
E: jubileecentre@contacts.bham.ac.uk W: www.jubileecentre.ac.uk

Practical wisdom in the (formerly) 'public' domain: where moral and civic intersect

Helen Haste
Harvard Graduate School of Education helhaste@aol.com

In this paper I will address two questions that are prompted by issues around phronesis but depart from a strictly 'virtue' model, and its implications for moral development and therefore moral education. First, I will argue that 'practical wisdom' is particularly applicable to an area that increasingly intersects with moral functioning – civic engagement – and second, I will argue that the data (and theory) around the development of civic/moral engagement provides a different interpretation of 'enacting' virtuous or other moral/civic things and how such enacting contributes to development.

The boundaries of moral and civic action, and their relevant motivation and identity issues, have become increasingly blurred as civic participation has been extensively broadened to recognize considerably more than voting behavior, and partisan activity. First, in the last fifty years many 'social' areas of political and legal change especially relating to social justice, inequality and the rights of minorities, have been heavily charged with a moral imperative. Second, these social areas frequently have blurred the boundary – indeed overthrown it in some cases – between the personal/private and the political/public, the traditional dichotomy. In particular, the experience of oppression and discrimination, and the cultural narratives and norms that permitted such unjust practices, have come to be recognized as a legitimate basis for analyzing and interpreting power relations. Furthermore, when we look at what motivates people, especially the young, to engage in civic participation we find that often it is *moral* outrage at some injustice. Hence, 'practical wisdom' must now encompass areas of the civic domain, not only interpersonal or intrapersonal moral behavior, habits and values.

With regard to implicit models of development or motivation, I would note that a virtues approach, in general, emphasizes the development of dispositions and good habits, especially through practice and the experiences which ground habit. Hence practical wisdom is tied both to the object of judgment and to the development of such judgment-making. In other theoretical models of moral and civic development, the emphasis is on how experience presents opportunities for reflection and the acquisition of more elaborated skills and critical thinking. For example, a young person might join a group to help the homeless out of compassion for the morally-impoverished individuals concerned, but may from there move to a wider understanding of social inequalities, the complex socio-economic factors that lead to becoming homeless, and also their own privileged status. These processes, in addition to the moral outrage mentioned earlier, involve active construction of understanding and explaining, which take place also within a social and cultural context that scaffolds them. A parallel is also found in using controversial issues in the classroom for generating critical thinking.

The implications of the above are that we should be looking at practical wisdom in a wider range of actions, beliefs, motives and skills than those, perhaps, encompassed only by individual virtues and personal attributes.

This is an exciting time, worldwide, in civic education and scholarship around civic participation. It is also a troubled time. Many countries have unstable governments, internal tensions among different ethnic or religious groups, factions who resort often to violence, and increasingly large gaps between the rich and poor. Large-scale immigration is everywhere; some is economic, some is in flight from oppression or intractable conflict. This puts pressure on the countries who receive the refugees and we see, increasingly, resistance to this and the hardening of extremism. At the same time, we see many examples of programs to improve global consciousness and education for global citizenship. We see many organizations and civic groups, both formal and informal, explicitly working to make bridges between groups, ideologies and identities. We see the extraordinary rise of social media which link people across nations, which mobilize civic action very fast, and bypass the traditional hierarchical political structures. Yet this can also be used for pernicious xenophobia.

These developments pose challenges and problems for political and social leaders. They also pose challenges for many traditional theories and approaches to political activity, to how we analyze participation, and therefore, to how we define the goals of civic education in a democratic society. Not least, they make explicit a tension between civic education as designed to sustain the status quo but with more active participation in political institutions, and as designed to create critical citizens who try to effect social change towards a more just society. But perhaps the most salient development is the challenge to traditional boundaries, such as between public and private, and the scope of what should be seen as the 'civic domain'. Especially this means expanding civic action well beyond voting and party support. These have large implications for what should comprise education for effective citizenship.

There have also been significant developments in how we define research questions and pursue methods to answer them. Two hitherto rather distinct domains have been brought together in pursuit of two overarching questions: *how do we understand the factors involved in civic participation,* and *how do we understand the developmental trajectory by which the young person becomes an effective citizen*? Creating any program of civic education, whether within schools or elsewhere, requires the intersection of both these questions. Historically, civic education in many countries has implicitly worked within a political science model of participation that emphasizes societal institutions, ideology, the performance of democracy through representation, and prioritizing partisan-related action. This model pays little attention to individual factors; what might motivate, or demotivate, the citizen. It also privileges knowledge as the route to civic engagement. In contrast, once we widen the definition of the civic domain, we find that values across a wide range of issues are important. To address these questions, we need novel data collection and analysis methods, and new research questions. Finally, we need to consider quite profoundly how to reformulate the goals and methods of civic education.

It is an exciting time to be in this field. The opportunities for shaping innovative curricula and pedagogy are considerable. There are stimulating opportunities for scrutinizing many aspects of theory. These also have implications for other areas of education and psychology. Novel methods for data collection and analysis include looking at different kinds of data and also ethnographic, discursive and participatory methods.

Let us first consider the major world civic events that have affected the field.

Social change and the boundaries of 'civic'

Fifty years ago much scholarly writing on politics was about stable democratic societies, with a strong emphasis on US models and practices. Democracy was defined by Western practices and goals; the main concerns were around voting and conventional electoral activity. Civic education was about equipping young people with the institutional knowledge to guide their intelligent and active voting. The civic scene was however already changing. Worldwide, grassroots activism and 'rights' oriented social movements were using - and redefining – democratic processes outside the parliamentary channels. Power questions and relationships became increasingly infused with moral rhetoric and moral arguments became more explicit in goals for social change. The boundaries between public-political and private-moral became blurred. These developments incidentally reminded people that historically, social change has often been infused with moral outrage, a point often lost when the debate becomes focused on parliamentary processes.

The US Civil Rights movement, the anti-Vietnam War and anti-nuclear protests, the women's and gay rights movements, environmentalist activism, along with numerous other grassroots protests, brought unconventional civic action into the foreground. They required different theories and interpretations both in political science and in social psychology. The factors which prompt unconventional participation include motivation, the balance between ideological and moral impetus, and how much a person is willing and able to make a – possibly risky - personal commitment. These differ from voting behavior; new ways of thinking about the civic domain emerged. These developments have changed the agenda: all have important implications for developing education for effective citizenship.

These developments also challenge another stalwart of traditional political analysis. The Left-Right spectrum has long been a convenient way to classify political parties, at least in Western democracies and, to an extent, many people who are actively engaged with politics seem comfortable with self-defining along the spectrum. Scales measuring values along the Left-Right spectrum continue to be used, despite the fact that any careful look at both parties and social movements shows its flaws. However the "Right" in many countries divides sharply between social, and economic or libertarian, conservatives, and leaders

of ‘conservative’ parties often struggle to maintain a common voice. The ‘Left’ label attaches to many social movements, yet these attract people from across the spectrum to whom they mean different things. For example, within their ranks, feminists, or environmentalists, may share similar goals, but from different standpoints and value positions. In the USA there is no institutional Left, only positions that in Europe would be clearly ‘centrist’, so US data on value variation cannot adequately reflect international parallels.

Because grassroots activism is often not party-based, it has contributed to explicit broadening of what comprises the ‘civic’ domain –with considerable implications for what should be the goals and methods of civic education. Communitarian arguments challenge the liberal emphasis on individual autonomy, emphasizing the importance of social context, community interaction and dialogue. There has been increasing awareness of cultural diversity within societies, and diversity of worldviews and moral positions across different societies. The variety of ways that people make sense of experience and values challenge longstanding assumptions about universal values. World political changes contributed. After the collapse of the Soviet empire, former satellite states sought their own definitions of ‘democracy’. They drew on their own national identities and histories, they did not adopt either US or other western versions. In countries struggling with the aftermath of civil war or internal violence, there was similar diversity of solutions and new programs. It became explicit that there is a vast range of cultural stories.

There are also psychological realities. How people actually in real life define themselves as ‘good citizens’, and what comprises taking civic responsibility, is much wider than the relatively rare task of voting. They include helping in the community, and being aware of current events, as well as participating in single issue politics, whether at the most local level of improving an amenity, or at a global level such as environmental or human rights. These issues engage people, they promote a sense of personal responsibility to take action, and they are likely also to lead to acquiring the necessary skills to do so. All of the above have been hugely affected by the major revolution in social media, which dramatically shifts the locus of the power to communicate and influence, and the boundaries within which this is now possible.

All these contribute to a substantial shift in how we think about the civic domain and strongly suggest the need for new research strategies to understand and analyze it. Further, it suggests educating for a very different skill set. Traditional civic education assumed that knowledge of institutions was a good framework for young citizens’ understanding how their vote contributed to the democratic process. Many civic education programs worked with this assumption; tell young people about how laws are made, how the government is structured, and the country’s glorious history of freedom and democracy and this will produce keen and proactive citizens. Even if this is partly true, it does not address the concerns, motivation or useful skills of those marginalized by poverty, ethnicity or

religion who are not served by the status quo, nor those young people who are not personally marginal but strongly support the pursuit of social justice for those who are.

As the wider perspectives on what is to be defined as 'civic' develop, it has increasingly become apparent that there are two rhetorical strands in writings about civic education. In one strand, the goal explicitly is to create more active citizens, but active within the current system, supporting the status quo. In the other strand the goal is to generate critical citizens who are equipped to understand the system in order to challenge it effectively, if necessary, and to have the skills to do so. Arguably, a healthy society has both kinds of citizen, but there is considerable tension between these two goals and there are plenty of examples where one group attempts to implement policies to curb the other. An explicit example is how history should be taught; should national identity (and solidarity vis à vis other societies) be fostered by versions of history that validate the current regime or form of governance, including examples of successful conquest of others? Or should history give an account of the complexity of inter nation, or inter group, struggles for rights and ideologies, where both (or more) perspectives involved are presented with the goal of critical consciousness and more elaborated historical understanding? These battles continue within many countries' education agencies.

How to do research, what questions to ask?

The challenge lies in finding the right items to capture what are the salient elements of beliefs and values in any society or group. For example what are 'core' beliefs around social justice, loyalty, maintaining social order, preserving freedom and so forth? Underlying theories of ideology are core values and beliefs about what forms of social institution are necessary to attain civic goals and what should be moral priorities. Our methods must capture the narratives, discourses or rhetoric that are brought into both individual reflection on civic issues or in dialogue which is the crucial forum for co-constructing meaning. When we look at civic decision-making, at how people reflect on civic and social issues, and the motivating factors in civic action increasingly we find that there is not a simple, linear, conduit between value or belief and action, nor is there always just one element in the situation. In the data on how people deliberate about civic issues and action we see many elements – arguments, examples, justifications - being invoked, often elements that appear in conflict. This is *normal* human social behavior and it needs appropriate methods to capture.

There are strong motivational factors. Civic action and especially the decision to take responsibility for unconventional action involves often a strong moral impetus. Feeling able to pursue this also depends on a sense that one has the necessary skills, and that one can be an effective agent – alone or with others. *A sense of efficacy* is an important part of one's civic identity and an important element of civic skills. All of the above endorse the emerging picture that

humans are not simply rational decision-makers, engaging in neat cognitive problem-solving towards linear solutions.

What is involved in these processes? How are deliberation, dialogue and framing norms and explanations performed? What narratives and discourses do people draw upon when engaging either in conversation or in individual deliberation? This requires looking at the culturally available texts, writings, media material, and also the nonverbal symbols metaphors and artifacts, which enable us to understand the context within which ideas and action plans are formulated. Looking at how people use language also tells us how dialogue is managed, whether informally face to face, in the classroom, or when engaging in public persuasion.

Educational practices; actual and potential

Data from both quantitative and qualitative work amply demonstrate that school climate, especially opportunities for open discussion, taking responsibility for decisions that affect students, and collaborative activities, promote in young people a willingness to actively participate, as well as equipping them with skills. However a school climate that encourages democratic interaction goes beyond formal leadership roles for students within the school's governance. On the one hand there is learning direct skills such as civil debate, organization, decision-making. But also an effective institutional democratic climate models managing interpersonal and intergroup relationships, and norms for dealing with conflict and also inequality.

Education through controversy goes beyond a democratic school environment and is more challenging and richly beneficial. Addressing controversial issues, especially those which touch students' own lives (for example in the work of Diana Hess and Paula McAvoy, 2015) promotes skills for managing deliberation, developing a more complex understanding of institutions, political and social events, and different perspectives. These are exciting pedagogic strategies but they require teachers' tolerance of challenge and a social climate – not available in all cultures – that encourages young people to question the system and its power structures.

There is a long tradition of service-learning or community activity associated with schools, as well as other youth organizations, which demonstrates that participation does create motivation for current and future civic action, and the skills for organizing and taking responsibility. However there are some problematic issues. First, volunteering and service in general have a very different civic function in countries with and without a welfare state, and both rate of participation and motivation to do so vary accordingly. Second, while community service may, by enlarging young people's appreciation of deprivation or inequality, lead to greater civic consciousness and a potential for pursuing social change, equally it may be experienced merely as being 'helpful' - and firmly within sustaining the status quo.

Traditional civics education in many countries has remained safely within conveying knowledge of political institutions and accepted norms and, if at all, deals with social change primarily through (often sanitized) historical accounts. In addition to being critical only within accepted parameters, this approach concentrates often on cultivating appropriately patriotic sentiment.

I would argue that this pedagogy does not take account of what we know about the factors that contribute to youth participation; the motivation that may derive from a moral response, the need for a sense of personal efficacy, that one can have an effect, and the importance of immediate experience that touches local or identity attachment, rather than remote partisanship. The enduring question of a 'civic achievement gap' as described by Meira Levinson (2012) and others, points to the need for a personal connection to an issue, and particularly, a sense that one can personally engage with it. The formal institutions of society are too often outside the scope of action and engagement for marginalized members of society. We need research to fully understand these processes and therefore be able to generate effective and dynamic civic education programs.

The need for theory

\We need a theoretical model which can adequately take account of an individual actively making sense of information and experience, drawing upon culturally available resources such as narratives, metaphors, explanations, symbols and institutional structures, and doing so in dialogue with others whether face to face or within his or her own internal deliberation. We need a theory which recognizes that reasoning does not take place without emotion, and that affect is important because people only become engaged if they care, and if they feel personally stirred to take responsibility for their responses. We need a theory which recognizes that many aspects of civic cognition, affect and action are tied closely to the individual's identity as a civic being – 'I am the kind of person who…'The theory must provide an account of what identity comprises, as well as how identity develops in intersection with other persons and with cultural and institutional resources.

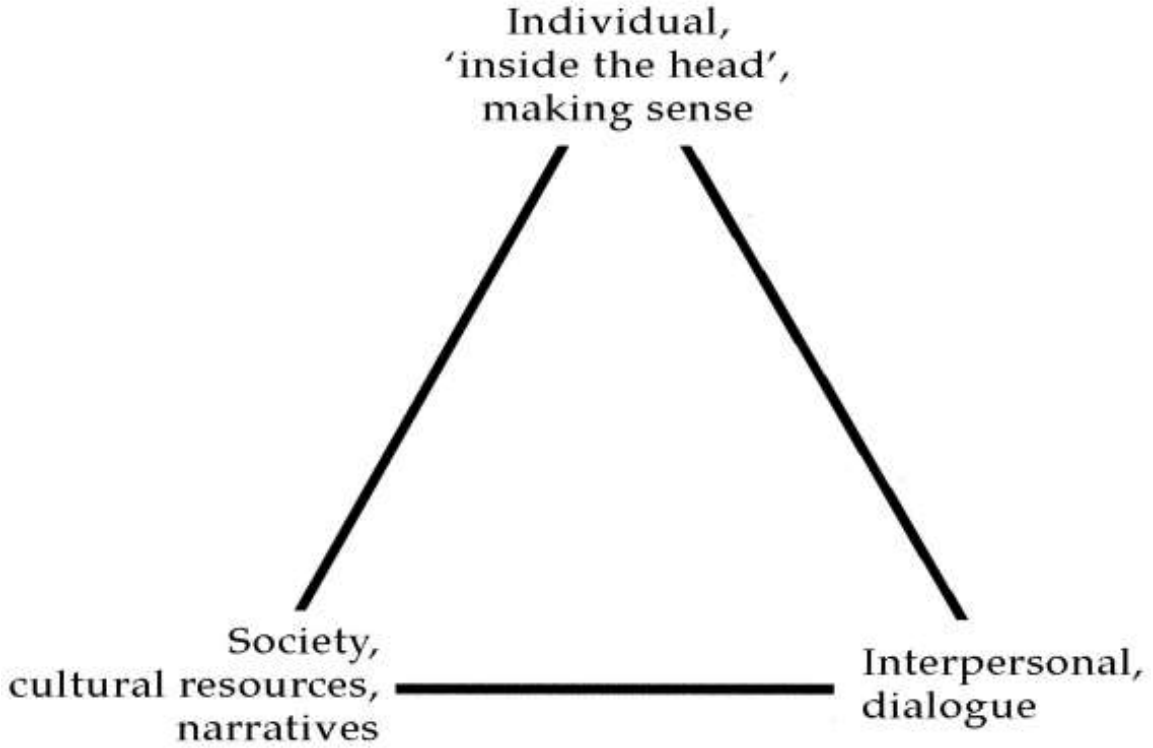
Specifically, I am critical of theory that assumes that the individual is passively molded by socializing agents; we actively seek meaning. I am critical of the application of some political science perspectives that focus only on macro features of party allegiance and power, ignoring the fact that the individual citizen is constantly juggling many aspects of his or her civic identity. I argue that this cannot be done without attention to the fluid and discursive nature of the making-sense process. Equally, I am critical of psychology that focuses only on internal individual cognition and ignores the social dynamics involved. I resist also psychological models which assume that attitudes or ideological affiliations are fixed and trait-like, rather than seeing civic responses as very much a matter of drawing selectively on a variety of available resources, those subjectively deemed relevant to the context.

I am influenced by scholars working on how we use language and how primary is conversation, and how powerful are cultural narratives and symbols in framing how we make sense. In particular, these initially included Jerome Bruner, Rom Harré, Michael Billig and Jürgen Habermas. An overarching concept within cultural psychology is that culture is about *process*, rather than about *structure*. We do not ask, as it were, 'what is culture?' but instead, ask 'how do we "do" culture?' We can describe different forms of societal institutions, different formal (and informal) rule systems, different assigned roles and their intersection, but it is *how we function within these structures* that constitute cultural, social and psychological processes. I developed a model deriving from the principles of Vygotsky and Bakhtin, but going back also to Vico and Hegel. This enabled me to think about the dialectical intersection and covariance of three dimensions the individual's internal processes, dialogic interactions with others, and cultural resources of narratives and norms, including institutional structures and practices that convey them.

First, the individual is an active agent, rather than a passive recipient, in social and cultural processes. Second, the culture-individual relationship is conceived as dialectical and dialogic, not as one-way. Third, language and linguistic processes are fore-fronted as the medium through and by which the culture-individual relationship is mediated and negotiated. The key concept is *discourse:* how we talk about, account for, present explanations, provide narrative, to justify and normalize our experience and our environment. It is not the structures that surround us that constitute our world, but on how we interpret them, negotiate them, work within them. These are inherently social processes, even when they take place inside our heads. How are 'culturally important' ideas and values (such as fairness, or democracy) talked about, explained through narratives? How does the individual's active interaction with such narratives frame their own explanations? 'Development' comprises increasing sophistication in the use of such narratives and in the *processes* of dialogue and interaction.

I express the model as a triangle (Figure 1). It represents the concept that all three dimensions are in process in any discursive, dialogic or cognitive act. The triangle represents a *location* of discourse, but what is key is the *intersection between* points. The crucial point is that the model is a total system: while we may focus on particular parts of it, we cannot explain any part without reference to the other parts. The model is *dialogic.* The relation between each of the three points is reciprocal, and in any situation, all three points of the triangle are engaged. The individual agent self is in dialogue with those persons and entities with whom face-to-face interaction happens, and the individual agent self is also in dialogue with the cultural and social locus. The locus of face-to-face interaction, the real world of dialogue, is in reciprocal relation to the cultural and societal context.

Figure 1. The cultural triangle



So while we may focus on individual cognition or affect (what I term the region of 'inside the head') it is only a partial picture unless we also recognize that individual processes happen in constant referral to cultural and dialogic resources. Similarly, we can focus on dialogic interaction and the co-construction of meaning, but we can only fully understand it when we take account of how individuals bring their own deliberations and choice of resources to the dialogue. Further, dialogue takes place within a cultural context; to succeed it requires common ground, shared value assumptions – or it is necessary for the unfamiliar to be made familiar, by explanation or analogy. That which is unfamiliar, problematic or not normative must be justified by the speaker through allusion to shared values and frames of meaning. Discourse has two dimensions. It includes actual conversation between persons – the dialogic processes identified in different ways by Vygotsky and Bakhtin. But 'discourses' are also culturally-shared stories available for framing how people can arrive at

mutual understanding, the background against which, and within which, dialogue is possible.

The individual in making meaning draws upon cultural resources *both* directly, and mediated by dialogic experience. Dialogue is only possible because it draws upon shared cultural resources, the common ground of familiar allusions, metaphors and explanations. Cultural discourses, values and narratives, are generated through interpersonal interactions as well as from individual ideas. Such discourses are invoked in both dialogue and individual thought. The crucial point is that the model is a *total system*; while we may focus on particular parts of it, we cannot explain any part without reference to the other parts.

Applying this model to moral or civic functioning asks how accounts or justifications are constructed, normalised and drawn upon in discourse, whether in dyadic negotiation or in intrapersonal meaning-making. What cultural resources are available, comprehensible and deemed appropriate? How are experience and institutions framed, discussed, admired, rejected, or presented as normative? We need to understand not only what people believe, or hold to be a true or moral description, but where this belief fits into their cultural narratives.

A core concept of my theoretical perspective is *civic identity*. How one defines oneself as a civic agent depends, in my view, on three contributing components; positioning, narratives and efficacy. The act of positioning places oneself in a relationship with others – whether this is about power, affection, responsibility, or generally 'we versus them'. Positioning is also determined by, or supported by, the choice of narrative invoked; how does the narrative define, or justify, relationships among those cited? Narratives further provide the potential explanations, justification and action plans that implicate the speaker, and normalize them. A sense of efficacy derives from many sources, including positive experience of action and argumentation, and narratives also provide role models for efficacy as well as explanations of power relationships that may facilitate, or not, belief that one can have an effect. Overall, the theoretical model brings together these elements in exploring the nature and antecedents civic engagement, and provides pointers for education.

Society and culture

To understand the cultural axis of the triangle we can usefully draw upon Foucault (1972, 1978, 1980), who argued that societal institutions and practices are framed and reproduced by cultural discourse. For example, what it is to be 'mad' depends on the current cultural story about the causes (and by implication the cures) of 'madness'. Is madness possession by the devil, is it a chemical imbalance in the brain, is it a consequence of past experience or personal vulnerabilities? Behaviour deemed a sign of madness in one culture may in another be seen as special spiritual insight. Homosexuality was constructed (and named) as a definable behaviour pattern only in the nineteenth century, but the idea of a person 'being' a homosexual is a twentieth century development.

Furthermore, within forty years we have seen homosexuality change from being a 'perversion' designated an illness in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders to being a legitimate life choice, and more recently to being a genetically-based preference.

People and historical events are similarly 'constructed' – and their construction changes. In periods of social change, communities and nations, at every level from government edict to parish pump, 'reconstruct' the narratives of national identity, national heroes and national history. Molly Andrews (2007) writes of the 'yearning for morality plays' that characterises times of national crisis and change. Barry Schwartz (1990) writes of how, after his death, Abraham Lincoln was a 'folk' hero, his social awkwardness and connection to the 'working man' symbolising the antithesis of the Eastern American élite. After his centenary in 1909, he was reinvented as an 'epic' hero, given a godlike statue in a temple structure at the administrative heart of the nation, his iconic message for America carved around him.

Dialogue

The second axis of the triangle is about interaction with others. Through dialogue we acquire and negotiate the frames and lenses to view, value and legitimate our experience, within defining, limiting and enhancing linguistic and cultural contexts. Dialogue is culture in action; we draw upon a range of narratives and discourses, we continually engage in *argumentation*, whether between persons or inside our own heads, and we continually engage in *positioning.*

Echoing Bakhtin, Michael Billig (1995) argues that we can only understand a statement when we know what it is arguing against. *There is always an audience*; how we phrase our statements depends on our assumptions about what they will understand and what values they share with us. Dialogue can only take place where there is common ground, where cultural references are shared, so to find such common ground we draw upon the examples, authorities, value allusions and metaphors that will make our case effectively and counter whatever we are challenging.

Narratives, accounts and justifications that we take for granted as 'true' and 'valid' also reflect how we position 'the Other', the outgroup in contrast with whom we position ourselves and in so doing, define ourselves. Positioning is a discursive act; it is placing oneself (or others) *vis a vis* the audience and within a particular context (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1991; Davies & Harré, 1990). In face to face dialogue, through what I ask of you, the way I present information to you, or through non-verbal acts, I may position you as a novice and myself as expert, or you as dependent and myself as taking charge. You can accept this positioning, or you can resist it – and in so doing you re-position me. But throughout we are negotiating our respective entitlements to convey information and influence.

Highly relevant to social and moral values is how we position others – individuals or groups – *vis à vis* our core values or those of our group. We tell our narratives of history (and therefore, our story of our current position) by positioning 'the enemy' as the antithesis of our valued attributes and our 'allies' as sharing them. In times of social change, we consciously re-position ourselves as we construct new narratives; Martha Minow (1998) argues that to create national harmony and to establish new personal identity, those whom I formerly oppressed must be reconstituted as equals; those who formerly oppressed me must, optimally, be reconstituted to create our shared future, with the past reconciled.

Individual reasoning and the appropriation of discourses

The third axis of the triangle is the individual. The individual is an agentic part of a system, neither privileged nor isolated. The individual actively engages with others in dialogue, drawing upon cultural resources both to make sense of the world, and to be effective in discursive action with others. Tappan (2006) has argued that we should regard moral functioning as a form of mediated action, and moral development as the process by which people gradually appropriate the moral mediational tools of words, language and forms of discourse. Mediated action involves an agent; it is always situated within the agent's own developmental history, and within the social-cultural and institutional context in which it occurs. 'Development' within this model is a dialectical process involving management of internal discourses, dialogic competence and the appropriation of increasingly complex moral resources.

A useful concept is *the human as Tool-User*. Through cooperative tool use, the novice comes eventually to perform the task unaided. Vygotsky (1978) explored tool use, particularly language tools, in the construction of meaning initially between persons – a construction that is eventually appropriated by the individual. The *experience* of using a tool – whether a computer, a screwdriver or a metaphor – sets the terms within which we can experience our world and also how we can adapt to the potential of our tools to change our world. Gerd Gigerenzer (2000) showed vividly how early cognitive scientists developed very different models of 'the computational mind' depending on how well their computers worked. The strikingly different constructions, between the USA and Europe, of the metaphor of 'frontier' have extensive implications for its rhetorical use in politics and in fiction. Understanding a culture requires understanding how a worldview is mediated by the tools of that culture.

Expertise reflects increasing sophistication in the use of one's cultural tools, so paradoxically, the more expert one is, the more one is mired in the frameworks, concepts and skills of that intellectual domain. Vygotsky argued, for example, that higher mental processes in scientific thought are free of their concrete support systems *only because* they are fully articulated within a specific semiotic system. So more complex reasoning is possible only because it is rooted in a culturally specific semiotic. The very nature of 'complexity' within any domain is

culture-specific[1].It is therefore unsurprising that the paradoxes of Kohlberg's moral stages are revealed especially in the different – and uncodable according to the Kohlberg Coding Manual – worldviews of complex reasoners in other cultures. A particular example was the very sophisticated religious Hindu whose obviously high stage responses to Kohlberg's dilemmas could not be accommodated by the Coding Manual (Shweder, Mahapatra & Miller, 1987).

Talk as phronesis?

This model raises questions which I will address in the discussion:

- Dialogue as action as well as reflection upon action
- To draw upon cultural resources in making meaning, and negotiating meaning itself, is active practice
- Action becomes meaningful when reflected upon
- The construction and application of narrative in argumentation are practical actions in the framing of meaning which make certain future actions possible, or not, and differently meaningful
- Positioning and perspective-taking are actions, inherent in the choice of a narrative, which create or reproduce power relationships, obligations, inclusion and exclusion
- We have seen in recent political events how the invocation of particular narratives and discourses normalizes (or destabilizes) forms of meaning-making, acceptable explanations, and intergroup and interpersonal relations.