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Philosophy for teenagers: Finding new relevence in old concepts

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Philosophy for Teenagers:
Finding new relevance in old concepts

Abstract

In 2008, the Curriculum Council of Western Australia launched a formal curriculum of philosophy and ethics education for upper secondary students. This thesis is a writing project that provides a new teaching text in support of this course. The thesis is composed of two components, a creative project and an essay.

The creative project is a work of non-fiction entitled, Philosophy for Teenagers: Finding New Relevance in Old Concepts, and has been researched and designed employing the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) Philosophy and Ethics course model. Philosophy for Teenagers aims to provide an innovative introduction to concepts such as the philosophical community of inquiry, formal reasoning and critical thinking, epistemology, free-will and determinism, ethics, political philosophy, aesthetics, society and culture, and conceptions of death. The introductory concepts addressed in the textbook are explored in philosophy classrooms within Australia and abroad, making it suitable for any high school student of philosophy, regardless of their geography.

The essay provides some historical background on secondary philosophy education in Western Australia and presents the insights and ideas of five philosophy educators who were involved in the conception, development and launch of the WACE Philosophy and Ethics course. The experiences, opinions and ideals of these people have, in turn, informed the development of the textbook, and their contributions have helped to shape the text. The essay also provides the rationale and research methodology upon which the textbook has been constructed. It includes a discussion of current and classic adolescent literature, the role of science fiction, primary and contemporary philosophy texts, humanities textbooks, and educational resources recommended for the WACE Philosophy and Ethics course. The essay also includes a report on the results of two focus group studies held with Year Eleven students. This action research was implemented for the purpose of collecting direct feedback from Philosophy and Ethics classes.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

    i.   incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;

    ii.   contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or

    iii.   contain any defamatory material.

Signed:

Date: 23.2.12

Acknowledgements

Statement of Confidential Information

Focus group studies conducted for this research project have received the approval of the Government of Western Australia's Department of Education and Training, and the Edith Cowan Human Research Ethics Committee. All data collected from the studies has been de-identified and is currently stored on the grounds of Edith Cowan University, accessible only to the researcher and her supervisors. Data will be stored for a minimum period of five years, after which it will be destroyed by shredding. Participant privacy and the confidentiality of information disclosed by participants is assured, except in circumstances that require reporting under the Department of Education *Child Protection* policy, or where the research team is legally required to disclose that information.

The data collected will be used only for this project and will not be used in any extended or future research without first obtaining explicit written consent from parents and children. As required, a summary of research findings will be made available to the Department of Education and Training on completion of the project.

Signed:

Date:

Contents

Introduction

In 2008, the Curriculum Council of Western Australia launched a formal curriculum of philosophy and ethics education for upper secondary students. My thesis is a writing project that delivers a new teaching text in support of this course. The thesis is composed of two components, a creative project and a critical essay. The creative project, entitled Philosophy for Teenagers: finding new relevance in old concepts, is an educational resource for students and teachers of philosophy and ethics at secondary school level. This essay provides a brief history of upper secondary philosophy education in Western Australia, together with the rationale and research methodology upon which the creative project has been constructed. Together, these components deliver a thesis that engages with the fields of writing, philosophy and education.

In Western Australia, the Philosophy and Ethics course is available to upper secondary students under the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE)[1]. It is available to students at three distinct learning levels, encompassing the needs of students far beyond the scope of a single doctoral thesis. This thesis does not attempt to provide complete coverage of all three levels of the course, but specifically addresses a selection of the key learning outcomes in Stages Two and Three. It has not been conceived as a replacement of the suite of textbooks written by Stephan Millett and Alan Tapper[2], their production driven by the necessary processes of curriculum development, but rather as a creative contribution to the limited pool of purpose-written resources for the Philosophy and Ethics course, and for secondary students of philosophy in general. While the text has been researched and designed employing the Western Australian Philosophy and Ethics course model, it is suitable for any high school student of philosophy, regardless of their geography. The introductory concepts addressed in Philosophy for Teenagers are explored in philosophy classrooms within Australia and abroad.

While a large proportion of my theoretical research has involved an investigation into the disciplines of both philosophy and education, I feel it is necessary to state that the project is primarily a writing thesis, bringing with it the obligations and responsibilities of that task. The creative project meets these obligations through the employment of both background and action research to create an original textbook developed specifically for high school students of philosophy. It aims to achieve this through the extension and adaptation of the conventions of traditional philosophy textbooks that

have been designed for the tertiary and adult reader, and a contemporary re-imagining of the ways in which creative stimulus material can be integrated within a largely expositional text.

The text provides students with a format that I hope will resonate with, and inspire, a teenaged readership. It also offers teachers of philosophy and ethics a resource that addresses many of the key learning outcomes of the course, while aiming simultaneously to provide stimulus material with which to challenge the imaginations of their students. Philosophy for Teenagers has evolved through the research of existing philosophy and adolescent literature, together with an examination of some of the pedagogical, developmental and psycho-social theories concerning the teenaged learner. From this research, a prototype of the text was developed. It was later refined and tested via action research in a classroom setting.

In Australia, philosophy education is a relative newcomer. New South Wales and Tasmania have resisted the movement towards a formal philosophy curriculum in high schools. In Western Australia, secondary philosophy education has been in existence for less than three years, with few high school teachers qualified to teach the subject. Suitable teaching resources are limited, with none currently recommended by the Curriculum Council that fully caters for this new demographic of teenaged learners.

Chapter One of this essay provides some historical context within which to place the development of Philosophy for Teenagers. Entitled Background to Philosophy for Teenagers, it is composed of the insights and ideas of five philosophy educators who were involved in the development and launch of the Philosophy and Ethics course. The experiences, opinions and ideals of these people have, in turn, informed the creative project, their contributions helping to shape the text.

Chapter Two, Methodology, describes and explains the rationale and decision-making behind Philosophy for Teenagers including the research and theoretical influences that determined the text's content and format. This chapter specifically addresses the research processes that underpin the thesis, including investigations into the Philosophy and Ethics syllabus, the conventions of traditional textbooks, and the influence of Matthew Lipman's Philosophy in Schools (P4C) movement. This chapter also explains

and supports my rationale for creating a narrative textbook, and my choices regarding stimulus material.

In Chapter Three, Background Reading, I discuss texts I consider relevant to the creative project. Broadly, this includes an examination of current and classic adolescent literature, the role of science fiction, contemporary philosophy texts, humanities textbooks, and educational resources recommended for the WACE Philosophy and Ethics course. I have arranged my study of the literature around four specific research questions, each designed to provide me with the information which I needed to develop Philosophy for Teenagers.

As mentioned, there are very few philosophy texts available that fully address the needs of upper secondary students and their teachers, and those recommended to teachers of philosophy currently tend to be age-inappropriate, or inconsistent in the delivery of content. However, there are several contemporary philosophy texts that have been influential in the development of my text, each possessing informative or inspiring characteristics that have made a distinct contribution to the thesis. These texts are discussed and evaluated against the requirements of the WACE Philosophy and Ethics curriculum and my research concerning the adolescent learner.

Applied Research, the fourth chapter of this essay, describes the action research practices employed to test and improve the text, in particular the rationale, methodology, evaluation and results of a series of focus group studies conducted in a Perth high school. An appendix to this chapter contains raw data collected from the focus group studies, including copies of the focus group questionnaires, transcripts and observations of all discussions held, and a qualitative analysis of the data.

Notes

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[1] Curriculum Council of WA, 'Senior Secondary: Philosophy and Ethics. Retrieved March 5, 2011 from http://www.curriculum.wa.edu.au/internet/Senior_Secondary/Courses/WACE_Courses/Philosophy_and _Ethics
[2] S Millett & A Tapper, *Philosophy and Ethics: A Resource for Units 2A-2B*, Impact Publishing, Cottesloe, Western Australia, 2007.

Chapter 1: Background to Philosophy for Teenagers

There is an abundance of energy for philosophy education in Western Australia, and a feeling of common purpose and goodwill among those individuals who laid the foundation for the creation of Philosophy and Ethics (PAE). The cohort is small and with the noticeable shrinking, and occasional disappearance, of some philosophy departments within universities, I believe it is this professional solidarity that has led to the launch of the new course for high school students.

The interviews that follow provided me with the opportunity to hear how and why philosophy is so important to a dedicated group of people who believe, as I do, that it is never too early to start thinking about the big questions of life. The stories gathered and presented here provide some background to the development of the WACE Philosophy and Ethics course. They are conversations. Each of the five educators interviewed has witnessed, and been an integral part of, a movement determined to see philosophy taught at upper secondary school. Their motivations and experiences differ significantly. Some are content with the results of their work and have long since moved on to other, unrelated, ventures. Others teach the subject to high school students every day, and are thus privy to the workings of the course at ground level. Not every interviewee is pleased with the way PAE has evolved, or with their particular experience of the journey but, even among the criticisms, their excitement and passion for philosophy is evident.

I conducted the interviews for a number of reasons. Firstly, I hoped to build a personal understanding of why the philosophy community was so resolute in its desire to develop, launch and, ultimately, nurture a philosophy course for teenagers. I wanted to know what they felt an education system *without* PAE lacked, so I could identify and appreciate the central elements delivered by the new course. Philosophy is a broad discipline. The concepts covered by the PAE syllabus represent only a fraction of where the study of philosophy can lead. I felt it was essential to find out why the particular topics selected for inclusion in PAE were so important to the policy-makers, to assist with the choices I needed to make for my textbook. Later in this essay, I discuss the constraints inherent in writing for a specific school syllabus. However, I will say here that pragmatism and compromise have been necessary in the development of Philosophy for Teenagers. While philosophical curiosity may have no limits, thesis

development has boundaries. Compelled to make choices about what went into the textbook, and what to leave out, I thought it was important to hear, and understand, the personal stories of those most intimately connected with the process—the decision-makers and the educators involved with PAE at conception.

Another reason I included these narratives in my thesis was to mine the teaching experiences of this group for their insights in the classroom. Each interviewee is clearly passionate about teaching philosophy to young adults. In their various offices, surrounded by books and documents and schedules, I watched these educators slip from cautious formality into bright animation as they related a student's electric moment of understanding. In these formal spaces, I saw transformation. Hands sketching the air between us. Bodies leaning in, an invitation to conspiracy. I thought that any textbook I endeavoured to create should try to capture their enthusiasm. The experience of talking to them has, I hope, made my work a little bolder. Each individual has, in his or her own way, had to shape and create material for classrooms where there was none. The interviewees told of resistance to change and their need to push at the conventions when people said, 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it'. Access to these personal perspectives provided me with inspiration for Philosophy for Teenagers, and encouraged me to direct my occasionally off-beat way of viewing the world into my writing.

Finally, I felt that the thesis would be incomplete without some context. The interviews that follow do not represent a complete account of philosophy education in Western Australia, nor do they include the contributions of everyone involved in the creation of PAE and the philosophy in schools movement. The interviews form part of my research for Philosophy for Teenagers, a component that provided background, pedagogical considerations and some useful insights and ideas for the textbook. The interviewees represent the 'first wave' for PAE, the genesis of the course. In terms of this thesis, their experiences have value because they emphasise those characteristics of the course that are vital.

Philosophy definitely has its detractors. In an age of wireless technology and the dissemination of blink-or-you'll-miss-it information, the discipline of philosophy can appear a little sluggish. In Australia, the promoters of philosophy education have had to elbow their way to the front of an already 'crowded' education curriculum.[1] Having

previously enjoyed a place among the traditional European quorum of classics—English Literature, Mathematics, Science and Social Sciences—philosophy has recently been forced to reinvent itself, or be swallowed by an array of newer subjects. The measured, academic simmer of philosophical theory appears slow, compared to the instant byte of computer science or web design.

There are a number of factors responsible for the migration of students from traditional humanities subjects, not all connected with the lure of technology. Two of these factors are early academic 'streaming', and the provision of vocations-based careers counselling. 'Streaming' (also known as tracking) is a practice whereby schools attempt to identify a student's academic strengths and weaknesses, and then channel the student into an ability-appropriate study pathway.[2] Recent research has called the practice of streaming into question, concluding 'The results consistently indicate that early tracking increases inequality in achievement.'[3] This may suggest that the opportunities lost through streaming, such as access to subjects and programs that promote higher order thinking, are of a greater disadvantage to students than the difficulty of attempting to 'keep up' in a challenging environment.

In early secondary school, vocations-based career counselling encourages students to identify their academic strengths, select the education and career track that best suits those strengths, and then choose subjects that lead directly into the job market. This practice also has its critics. In a review of policies for information, guidance and career-counselling, educational policymakers were encouraged to prepare students to make more informed decisions about their own education and future occupations. The review stressed that:

> even relying on basic economic theory, information is not sufficient to make rational decisions. Stable preferences, the ability to consider a wide range of alternatives, the ability to think probabilistically, the capacity to consider trade-offs over time, and the recognition of the need to make decisions, are also necessary.[4]

When it comes to information about careers and career pathways, students are often overwhelmed with information. According to Grubb: 'This approach *assumes* that individuals are sophisticated in using information, so that information is sufficient to making appropriate decisions.'[5] What students need now are decision-making tools for the job of decoding the vast array of information made available to them.

Despite criticism, the practices of educational streaming and vocations-based career counselling are, from the perspective of high school administration, both economical and pragmatic. They respond to the abilities and wishes of the student, and then attempt to marry them to the requirements of the job market and the forward-planning needs of the modern secondary school. In short, they attempt to facilitate the career aspirations of the average fourteen-year-old. What they do not do is cater for the evolving aspirations of a teenager, one who will continue to grow both mentally and physically throughout his or her high school life. 'Streaming', and vocations-based careers advice, prioritises the requirements of an ever-specialised job market over the needs of children to receive a broad and well-balanced education.

This is the challenge confronted by humanities educators. Faced with questions by students and parents such as, 'What kind of career lies at the end of a humanities-based subject pathway?' or 'I'd like to be a forensic scientist. Why should I study philosophy?', proponents of philosophy are hard-pressed to provide compelling responses. However, it is in precisely this environment that the value of a sound education in philosophy becomes apparent. According to Grubb's report:

> decision-making is not a simple "skill" that can be taught at one point in time and then used ever after. It also implies that any effort to improve the sophistication of individuals in making any kinds of decisions, including educational and career decisions, must be continuous over time rather than episodic, and should be developmentally-appropriate, that is, different for secondary students than for college and university students in the throes of career decisions, or different for those at earlier stages of development in any dimension.[6]

In an age when so much information arrives at our homes ready-packaged, via websites designed as much for their marketing value as for their content, I agree with Grubb's assessment. The ability to determine what is genuine or factual has never been more difficult. Coupled with the trend of many young people to work, play and socialise online, this problem presents itself at a time when they possess the least life experience. I think the complexity of what the Internet provides demands a response of equal sophistication. Certainly, efforts have been made to provide students with advice regarding the epistemological challenges of sites such as Wikipedia and Ask.com. The

school librarian has evolved into the library 'technician', a new role more concerned with the provision of reputable electronic material and the tools to use them, than with the books lining their library walls. Recently, I spotted a cleverly printed coffee mug that captured this change beautifully. It read, 'Librarian: The Original Search Engine'. Ironically, I could not buy the mug. My protection software deemed the site 'insecure'.

Many young adults believe that the answer to every question worth asking can be found on the Internet. If it is out there, Google will find it for them. However, one day, the job of feeding that vast repository of knowledge will fall to these same people. I believe that students require a purpose-designed philosophy curriculum that fosters the reasoning and decision-making skills needed to become critical users of information, as well as providers of the next generation of knowledge. Research suggests that the ideal curriculum is one that addresses this need consistently, throughout the educational process—from primary to tertiary levels.

In Western Australia, the tradition of offering philosophy as a tertiary-level course is firmly established. Until recently, this would likely have been a student's first exposure to the subject. At many Western Australian primary schools, critical thinking and philosophy-based programs have been offered as part of the 'extension', or 'gifted and talented', syllabus. The majority of these programs have been derived or adapted from the Lipman model, do not form part of the mainstream curriculum, and are not available to all students.

Prior to 2008, a formal curriculum for the teaching of philosophy and ethics to secondary students did not exist in Western Australia. This is not to say that the subject went unacknowledged in secondary schools, rather that it did not have formal recognition within the public school system. Notably, a number of private schools including Wesley College, Hale School, Methodist Ladies' College and St Hilda's Anglican School for Girls devised their own philosophy courses. These courses were non-standardised and not examinable for tertiary admission; they were rarely taught beyond Year Ten. Similarly, the Catholic Education System has taught its own version of classical philosophy, generally connected to the philosophy of religion, and selectively adapted to incorporate Catholic values and beliefs. Again, these courses represented the particular goals and interests of the schools and families they served.

Between 1992 and 2008, four Western Australian schools subscribed to the International Baccalaureate Program (IB), an internationally accredited curriculum that includes the study of philosophy and critical thinking. These schools are Presbyterian Ladies' College, Scotch College, The International School of Western Australia and The Montessori School. The IB three-level curriculum offers a two-year Diploma Course for students aged sixteen to nineteen that is recognised internationally for university entrance.[7]

More recently, a dedicated course in Philosophy and Ethics (PAE) has been introduced for upper secondary school as part of the Western Australian Certificate of Education. The course, introduced to Western Australian classrooms in 2008, is assessable for the purposes of tertiary admission and stands independently of religious education courses. The following historical perspectives provide some background to the development of the Philosophy and Ethics course, as well as an insight into the experiences of five academics and educators who conceived, developed and implemented this course.

Alan Tapper: expanding the reach of philosophy education

In the early months of my candidacy, I had an opportunity to meet with a local publisher of school textbooks. I was nervous and excited and, before my coffee had time to cool, realised I was also a little unprepared. The publisher made it clear that she was not interested in a textbook on philosophy and ethics. Disappointed, I pressed on to describe my grand vision of an educational resource that re-imagined the boundaries of textbook convention. Dissecting the meeting later, I decided that this may have been the prudent place to stop talking. Happily, she was wiser than I, and graciously interjected to explain that the reason she was not interested in publishing a textbook on philosophy and ethics was because she had recently done so. It was a suite of three textbooks, in fact, written by a pair of local philosophy professors.

In hindsight, this meeting was amongst the most enlightening experiences I have had during my candidacy. The publisher advised that, in her opinion, the most valuable source of information and advice to be gained about philosophy and ethics teaching in Perth might be the people I had referred to as 'the competition'. From my perspective, the Western Australian philosophy community seemed an impenetrable fortress of academics. A skittish writing student, I felt intimidated—a mere philosophy 'wannabe'.

Perhaps the most valuable lesson I learned that day was that I had only to set aside my fears and knock on the door. 'Philosophy professors are', she said, 'an open-minded bunch.' The second lesson learned that day was to research an interviewee well *before* the coffee arrived.

My confidence bolstered, I began my interviews with Dr Alan Tapper. Tapper has taught philosophy and ethics at tertiary level for twenty years, and is currently engaged as a Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Applied Ethics and Philosophy at Curtin University. In 2004, the Curriculum Council of WA asked Tapper to oversee a reference group for the development of the WACE Philosophy and Ethics (PAE) course. Selected by the Curriculum Council, this community of eight people included academics and educators, each chosen to contribute to the development of a standardised course of philosophy designed specifically for upper secondary students. Co-authored with Stephan Millett, it was Tapper's suite of three philosophy textbooks for PAE that had led me to his office door. Nervous, and armed only with my pen, I hoped that my publisher acquaintance was a better judge of philosophy academics than I.

Although Tapper has not been directly involved in philosophy programs at primary school level, he is very much aware of the contributions made by others to early philosophy education. In particular, he regards Matthew Lipman's *Philosophy for Kids* (P4C) program as an important model, one that local educators have adapted to suit the Australian classroom. Well before the introduction of a dedicated secondary school philosophy and ethics course, Tapper was committed to the adaptation of P4C concepts for high school students. His feeling was, and still is, that students 'learn to learn better' when exposed to critical thinking techniques consistently throughout their school years. He maintains: 'The absence of philosophy in the high school is seriously detrimental to kids.'

This is a strong statement, and one that may not consider fully the contributions of other subject areas. For example, mathematics and science promote logic and empirical reasoning. Each of these disciplines encourages students to test hypotheses against experience and evidence. Many traditional social science subjects, including history, politics and economics, draw on underlying philosophical conceptions of social justice, liberty and equality. I believe that English and Literature, perhaps the least obvious of subjects to pair with the strict rigours of critical reasoning, are possibly philosophy's

greatest champions. In their aim to foster an understanding of language as a 'vehicle for communication, a tool for thinking, a means of creativity and a source of pleasure'[8], the study of English and Literature consistently overlaps with the aspirations of philosophy. Clarity of expression, the ability to argue logically, an understanding of form, and an appreciation of beauty represents much of what a good English teacher strives to convey. Cumulatively, the traditional western curriculum has been teaching the bones of critical thinking and philosophy. Folded into the syllabus of many school subjects, perhaps we fail to recognise it.

Philosophy for Children (P4C) is a philosophy program designed to promote reasoning and critical thinking skills in primary school students. The project was conceived and launched by Matthew Lipman, a professor of philosophy at Columbia University in New York. Since its inception in 1972, P4C has been employed by educators in over forty countries.[9] Lipman's program and teaching resources have led to the introduction of philosophy to primary schools worldwide. His *Philosophy for Children* series provides children and their teachers with stories and activities designed to be used from kindergarten to year seven. The stories are character-based and revolve around the interaction and ideas of fictional children and young adolescents. The protagonists are exposed to philosophical concepts such as justice, freedom, the nature of reality, morality, personhood, beauty and civic responsibility, each contained within an age-appropriate narrative.

Lipman's materials have also inspired educators to modify and extend the P4C project to complement their local culture and educational requirements. In Australia, Philip Cam edited *Thinking Stories*, a collection of international and local narratives designed to promote trust, respect, tolerance and reasoning in primary students.[10] Tim Sprod and Laurance Splitter produced *Places for Thinking*, a series of philosophy-inspired picture books aimed at students from pre-primary to year four.[11]

Asked whether he felt the P4C program could have been adapted for secondary schools, Tapper said that, while he feels there is little difference in the concepts included in the P4C program, the materials used to teach P4C exclude high school students. This became particularly apparent during the writing of resources to accompany the course. He speculates:

> When you look at how it (P4C) played out in Australia, and the people who adopted it in Australia—Phil Cam, Tim Sprod, Gil Burgh, a whole number of people, including Stephan Millett and Felicity Haynes—my guess is they were primarily creating materials for the primary school.

In addition to the problem of teaching materials, Tapper feels that the manner in which secondary schools are traditionally modelled might also have worked against the successful adaptation of P4C into a workable course for secondary students. He argues that secondary schools operate heavily on a teacher-led model, a model where the student role is one of 'passive learner'. While it is true that high school classrooms are generally teacher-led, I am not convinced that the role of students in Western Australian schools can be described as entirely passive. My observations as both a researcher and a parent indicate that students must usually provide feedback as part of their assessment. In Western Australia, class sizes are down to a ratio of 11.7 students to every teacher.[12] Even given the propensity of many adolescents to avoid class participation because of peer pressure, these statistics indicate that today's classrooms are less crowded than at any time previously. In many schools, I believe it is getting a lot harder to play the 'invisible student'.

According to Tapper, the creation of PAE was driven from within the Curriculum Council, rather than by any external pressure exerted by the philosophy community in Western Australia. During the redevelopment of the old curriculum, when 150 subjects were condensed, discarded, or repackaged into a more manageable fifty-two, the Council chose to make room for a few fresh subjects. PAE, along with Psychology, Aboriginal and Intercultural Studies, and Politics and Law, was among a handful of entirely new courses. Tapper speculates that the genesis of this probably lay in an examination of curricula offered outside the state and overseas, where philosophy often features as a mainstream subject.

As the development phase of PAE occurred while the Western Australian education system was employing an outcomes-based education model, Tapper and his reference group were supplied with a specific framework upon which to build the course. Tapper is candid as he talks about the struggle of 'flying blind' and creating a new curriculum in an outcomes-based environment. The idea of outcomes, central content and levels was unfamiliar territory to the reference group. In Australia, it was the first course of its type, a difficult process with no model for comparison. Despite this, he describes the

development of PAE as smooth and harmonious, with some disagreement only amongst the Catholic sector. He observes: 'I had a sense that the Catholic participation was not that happy with it, but they were struggling also with the new religion course and I think that was a fairly big handful for them.'

In the early stages of the PAE course development, the Council proposed a course where philosophy and religion would be combined. However, this notion was quickly discarded by the Council when it was argued that the two areas were incompatible for study as a single subject. The Council then agreed to the development of Religion and Life, a separate subject that deals with the subjects of faith and religious worldviews. Tapper feels strongly that this decision was, and is, in the best interests of the integrity of both subjects but, in an educational environment that comprises both secular and religious schools, it is problematic for PAE. This is due partly to the economics of running a secondary school and partly to the inclination of religion-based schools to choose between Religion and Life and Philosophy and Ethics, on the strength of faith-based arguments. The result has been a distinct absence of enthusiasm for PAE among many religious schools, a factor which could slow the future success of the course.

In addition to some religious bias, a scarcity of suitable teaching materials, and the competition of fifty-one other subjects, there are other hurdles faced by the new PAE course. One such difficulty is a 'chicken and egg' scenario. Currently there are fewer than 1500 PAE students in Western Australia, with very few teachers trained to teach the subject. In turn, because there are so few teachers to teach PAE, schools are reluctant to offer the course, keeping student numbers low. In addition to this cycle, there is also no clear pathway to becoming a PAE teacher. The large teaching universities, such as ECU and Curtin, have decided that there are not enough students to support the course. According to Tapper: 'There's a graduate certificate at Murdoch but, in general, there's not a clear pathway.' The Australian Philosophy in Schools Association (APIS) conducts its Level One course, an entry-level course that has attracted mainly primary school teachers to date, but recent attempts to attract teachers to its Level Two course have been unsuccessful. Tapper feels that the promotion of PAE, while problematic, appears to be happening by 'a kind of snowball process'. Whenever PAE is offered, enrolments appear, prompting principals to ask, 'Are there teachers who could teach this?'.

Despite the obvious difficulties faced by PAE, Tapper remains optimistic about the future of the course. PAE has been implemented in a number of secular schools and in several private schools, with individuals prepared to change direction and take on the training necessary to teach PAE. This is no small challenge. 'I think philosophy is difficult,' proposes Tapper, 'because it's conceptually different from other subjects. You're not just teaching materials, you're teaching ideas.' The course has attracted a number of enthusiastic and committed people, a few equipped with philosophy training and some who think, 'Well, others are doing it, I can probably give it a go'.[13]

Stephan Millett: pioneering philosophy in secondary school

I emerged from my first encounter with 'the competition' unharmed, and decided to visit Tapper's co-author, Stephan Millett, while a spirit of cooperation still lingered around their offices. A week later, I arranged myself at a small table overflowing with books and paper stacks, ready to interview Millett. I asked my first question. The telephone rang. I waited. The question was re-launched. Again, the phone interrupted. He apologised, placed the line on hold and, for the following eighty minutes and fifty-seven seconds, offered his full attention. Later, on my way to the car, I considered the value and generosity of the interview. Clearly, any notion of 'the competition' existed only in my mind. So far, the philosophy community had proven available, open and generous.

Before he was an ethicist, a philosopher, or a school teacher, Associate Professor Stephan Millett was a journalist. Commencing in 1986, he ran the journalism program at Curtin University for twelve years, simultaneously completing higher degree work in philosophy. He describes his migration from journalism to philosophy as having an element of luck. He reveals: 'I got the chance out of left field to study philosophy, and that is what I'd been working for, but I didn't actually expect it to happen. So I did a PhD in philosophy at Murdoch and then came back to run journalism and the two no longer matched. My heart and my employment didn't match.'

The mismatch did not last for long. In 1998, Millett was employed as the foundation Head of Philosophy and Ethics at Wesley College in South Perth where he pioneered strategies for teaching philosophy to boys at a time when no formal curriculum existed. His teaching experience, coupled with his background in journalism and philosophy,

has placed him at the centre of philosophy education in Western Australia. While Millett's formal involvement in the development of the WACE Philosophy and Ethics course did not occur until 2002, his work at Wesley College was a significant contribution to the foundation for philosophy education, particularly in Western Australian high schools.

Millett describes his first year at Wesley as 'a pretty hard gig'. His philosophy curriculum unfolded as he taught. He employed the philosophical community of inquiry as his major strategy, developed workbooks, flowcharts and process sheets, and used any sort of focus material that was available to him. He says of boys' education: 'Most of the boys like simple, stepped process work, so if you could break down the philosophical work into simple processes, and at the end get them to talk about it, it seemed to work.' In conjunction with a Society and Environment teacher and two Science teachers, he worked to develop philosophy material that complemented their existing programs. He aimed to integrate philosophy into the curriculum. However, it wasn't a Tertiary Entry Examination (TEE) program. He explains: 'It was the first time in the state that philosophy had been taught anywhere, so there was no model to go on. I'd done some philosophical training, I'd done some teaching, but basically I was new to it—I didn't know how to teach a classroom of boys.'

Millett's goal was to find ways to encourage students to look at their course material in a philosophical way. In Society and Environment classes, the notions of climate change and sustainability offered opportunities for philosophical questioning and thinking. In the Science curriculum, students were encouraged to reflect on scientific concepts and also to employ a range of techniques and strategies for engaging with the ethical component of those concepts. In concert with Wesley's Photography teacher, Millett also assisted in the development of philosophical approaches to visual images. He recalls: 'We worked on semiotics of images, ethical impact of images, interpretation and meaning and, using his expertise in photography and picture analysis, I devised small modules which were then used mainly with the Year Eleven boys.'

In his effort to balance the natural exuberance and energy of boys with the requirement to teach a discipline that demands concentration and quiet reflection, Millett often employed Buddhist mindfulness meditation in the classroom. Sometimes the meditation

was a guided visualisation. Occasionally, it was a breathing exercise. Millett felt that the practice of meditation 'broke the hook of what had been before—usually recess or lunch.' Mindfulness meditation was an activity that came to be valued by the students. 'So we would have a focussed meditation, guided visualisation, breathing works, basic meditation techniques,' said Millett, 'and when they asked [about the origins of the practice], they were told "this isn't Buddhism. This is basic Buddhist psychology. You can take this technique and use it for the next fifty years."'

The notion that teaching opportunities can be found across the curriculum and beyond is highly relevant to my thesis. If Millett could find ways to use science topics or photography lessons in order to highlight philosophical concepts, then perhaps it is reasonable for me to weave these same concepts into a variety of fictional and non-fictional scenarios, to similar effect. My goal is to illustrate the relevance of philosophy to teenagers through story-telling and life outside of school, while Millett drew upon a varied high school curriculum to find stimulus material. This part of the interview reinforced the idea that, while the abstract nature of philosophy concepts may be defined in purely expository terms, they ultimately refer to everyday life. If this is so, why not use everyday life to illustrate them? Buddhist meditation provides opportunities to discuss the nature of the mind and religion. The problem of carbon emissions and global warming can lead to questions about ethics. Analysis of a photograph may lead to debates about morality, or the limitations of language. I think Millett's experience in the classroom highlights that philosophical thinking does not need to be self-referential. It can also look outward.

Prior to the introduction of the formal WACE Philosophy and Ethics course, philosophy in primary and secondary schools was often taught as a limited adjunct to religious and values education, or offered within gifted and talented programs. During his seven years as the Head of Philosophy and Ethics, Millett describes Wesley College as being at the 'centre' of philosophy education in Western Australia:

> To the best of my knowledge, it was the first place in Australia that made
> a full-time appointment for a philosophy teacher. Christchurch had Frank
> Sheehan, but he was the pastor, the resident chaplain who set up the
> Christchurch centre for ethics, and ran occasional lectures. There was a
> bit of religion-based discussion within Christchurch, a little bit
> happening at All Saints [College].

For the last two and a half years of Millett's time at Wesley, he taught almost exclusively in the junior school. His course still runs there. He taught philosophy to pre-primary-aged boys through to Year Four, and was also one of three teaching the courses he had developed in the senior school. He received a small grant from the University of Sydney in order to conduct research with Year Five students. The research project was designed to test the effectiveness of the philosophical community of inquiry, and was conducted within the framework of Religious and Values education. Millett sourced stimulus material from Lipman's P4C texts and Philip Cam's *Thinking Stories*, as well as excerpts from the Bible and the Upanishads. His aim was to find simple stories that could be read in half a lesson, followed by questions, a philosophical community of inquiry, and worksheets.

The idea that philosophy can be taught to children and or teenagers has been contested. An integral part of philosophical reasoning is metacognition, the ability to think about thinking. Piaget's theory of cognitive and affective development was, and remains, an influential force in educational and developmental theory. Piaget claims that as pre-adolescent children have not made the developmental transition to the formal operational stage they are incapable of full metacognition.[14] However, recent research suggests that the cognitive abilities of pre-adolescent children may have been misjudged, with some philosophers arguing that children are far more capable of philosophical thought that previously believed. According to Millett, the view that philosophy belongs only in our universities exists here and in the US. Among these views exists the notion that 'real' philosophy is simply too complex for the non-adult. US philosophy professor Richard F Kitchener claims that what the Philosophy in Schools Movement is teaching does not qualify as proper philosophy[15]. Conversely, Karin Murris, a philosophy of education professor based in South Africa, argues that philosophical thinking, like any other subject, is a process and that, while children may not engage with this subject at the same level of maturity and expertise as an academic, it remains philosophy. The learner's competency in receiving philosophy instruction does not determine whether it is possible or acceptable to teach it.[16] We must all start somewhere.

Millett's experience with his junior school students, together with the idea of philosophy as a process, has had a creative impact on Philosophy for Teenagers. The suggestion that children and adolescents develop to a prescribed timetable is gradually being replaced by new, more flexible, developmental theories. I think it is reasonable to assume that, if children and adolescents develop at different rates due to differences in individual learning experiences, there may also be benefits to providing more diverse stimulus material. In my textbook, I try to implement this idea, and deliver philosophical concepts in as 'non-linear' a fashion as is practical, given the syllabus requirements of PAE.

Early on, I worried about this approach. Would students get lost in the narratives? Would the philosophy components be over-shadowed by 'fun stuff'? Would the deliberate inconsistency of the material prove to be confusing, instead of stimulating? There was a great temptation to level out the narratives and connect them in a way that was more predictable and safe. However, when I re-read Philosophy for Teenagers, an endlessly terrifying activity, I am always surprised by the eclectic nature of the narratives. Hearing about Millett's classroom stories has fortified my belief that adolescent philosophy students are hardier than one might suspect, and unlikely to be distracted by a strategic collision of metaphors.

Millett sees philosophical community of inquiry (COI) strategies as the core of philosophy education. He says 'quite astonishing stuff happens' when students gather for this particular method of discussion. Suddenly animated, he describes the transfer of group ideas to the individual, Vygotsky's idea of the inter-personal moving into the intra-personal. It is this psychology that makes COI so effective. He observes: 'In effect, one or two kids in a group 'got' an idea and by the next week everybody'd got it.' Millett describes the development of junior school philosophy as a work in progress, employing a previously-modified version of the Lipman (P4C) method and continuing to modify it as he taught. Of the Lipman stimulus materials available, he used *Elfie* and *Pixie* in the junior school and *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* in Year Seven. In Millett's opinion, some of the Lipman books rely too heavily on American ideals and attitudes:

> I used a little bit of *Lisa* with the Year Elevens, but *Lisa* and *Mark* are
> much too American and their reliance, *Lisa* in particular, on the

American constitution, the Bill of Rights, as an ethical platform was just too hard to get over.

While I agree with much of Millett's assessment of the relevance of the content of P4C texts to an Australian readership, I do not think that the 'foreign' settings and backgrounds of Lipman's material should be viewed as a barrier for teachers and students of philosophy, particularly if used for teenagers. If, as I believe, philosophy can be found anywhere, then global, as well as local, perspectives also provide teaching opportunities. In his essay on modern youth travel, Desforges sees youth as 'a stage in the life course where individuals have the freedom to find out about the world and themselves as part of the transition into full adulthood, of making responsibilities and commitments to others.'[17] I think a global view is in keeping with the more 'connected' nature of adolescent life generally. Alternate cultures provide students with the chance to practise seeing through the eyes of others.

Today, primary school teachers are trained to teach philosophy via the Level One program, a course offered by the Federation of Australasian Philosophy in Schools Association (FAPSA) and their associate organisation in Western Australia, the Association for Philosophy in Schools (APIS). Together with Alan Tapper and Felicity Haynes, Millett ran the first Level One workshop at Wesley College in late 1999. He is unsure when the precise genesis for an upper school philosophy course occurred, but clearly remembers one of the earliest discussions about it at a meeting of the Curriculum Council. Describing the meeting as 'contentious' he said: 'I voiced an argument at that meeting that you needed both [religion and philosophy], and that religion may well be necessary but that didn't preclude philosophy.' He was determined that philosophy and religion should remain separate entities, and invited Paul Albert, the head of the Curriculum Council at that time, to Wesley College to witness the effectiveness and vibrancy of the school's philosophy classes in action. His determination was rewarded and, shortly after, it was announced there would be a separate philosophy strand.

During 2002 and 2003, the Curriculum Council employed Millett to write the new Philosophy and Ethics curriculum. His role, he explained, was that of 'emanuesis—the synthesiser of the work of a reference group.' The reference group process was managed within the Curriculum Council, and included several philosophy academics,

including professors Peta Bowden (Murdoch University), Barry Maund (UWA), Felicity Haynes (UWA) and Alan Tapper (ECU). As both secretary and distiller, Millett participated in many vigorous discussions about where the most philosophically important points lay. 'I was a voice in there, not just a secretary', explains Millett. 'Felicity and I managed to convince the group that a community of philosophical inquiry was necessary for good pedagogy. That became one of the early, accepted pieces.' The group then worked to locate the heart of the curriculum, devising three questions that they felt encapsulated the fundamental goals of philosophy. These three questions drive the curriculum now, and cover epistemology, metaphysics and ethics. They are:

What is there?

How do I know?

What ought I do?

As part of the writing process, Millett attended every meeting of the reference group. He took copious notes, devising a variety of matrices and grids that 'chunked' the information in a way that could later be organised by the group. He explains: 'We had a framework to work within. We had to find outcomes, and the outcomes had to be of a limited number, of a certain type, in a certain way. We recognised this as a particularly Procrustean exercise.' There were conceptual obstacles, and making the outcomes fit the prescribed framework was long and detailed work. In a sense, the reference group modelled what they wanted to see happen in a classroom, conducting round-the-table discussions about what should be included in the new course. Teamwork, and the general willingness of philosophy educators to collaborate with one another, was a feature of the development phase. 'It was not a clash of egos,' clarifies Millett, who feels that the success of the new course, and philosophy education in Western Australia in general, is due partly to a high degree of cooperation between some of the 'key players'. He states, 'Western Australia has enough philosophers for one good philosophy department. It just happens to be spread over four universities.'

Once the course of study was published, Millett's role officially ended, and the efforts of Dr Raymond Driehuis, as the Executive Officer for Philosophy, began. 'Getting to the point where there is a course of study, that's the story so far. Making sure that it fits into a school and is do-able at a school-level is where Ray came in most strongly.' While Millett no longer maintains any specific ties to the new Philosophy and Ethics course, he says: 'I'm really pleased that it's there. I have a vaguely paternal interest in

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it.' While no longer teaching at secondary level, Millett continues to maintain a connection with the grass roots of philosophy education, facilitating and judging communities of inquiry at the Hale Philosothon, an annual inter-school event for philosophy students. In conversation, his enthusiasm for philosophy education is evident. He adds: 'Philosophy starts in wonder. That's what kids do. They wonder. They wake up every day and they ask questions. Learning how to respond to those questions is important.'[18]

Matthew Wills: the view from Religious and Values education

The business of separating philosophy from religion has proved delicate. In a modern education system where church and state are seen as distinct entities, the everyday reality does not always match the theory. In the absence of a formal philosophy curriculum, it is ironic that informal philosophy teaching has often appeared under the Religious and Values Education banner. It has been an uneasy marriage, and one I felt compelled to explore further. I wanted to understand the place of philosophy teaching yesterday, and where it sits today, from the religious education perspective. Effectively, I wanted a peek at the demilitarised zone.

If such a zone exists, Matthew Wills is hardly the soldier-type. Gentle and polite, he guided me through the controlled chaos of the corridors of Hale School between periods two and three. It made me wonder how Wills could possibly channel all that physicality into anything resembling metacognition, simply because a bell announced it was time to do so. He has been an educator for over twenty-five years, starting his teaching career at Knox Grammar School in Sydney as Head of Religious and Values Education. Keen to promote an academic approach to religious and values education in Australia, Wills was inspired by the work of Dr Peter Vardy, an influential British philosopher and theologian. Vardy's promotion of philosophy education for all, not only for the Gifted and Talented students for whom he was regularly invited to speak, resonated deeply with Wills. In addition to his teaching role at Knox Grammar, he became increasingly involved in a network of schools that later became known as the Dialogue Australasia Network (DAN). Today, this network consists of more than 400 schools, colleges, and universities that promote a broad-based academic approach to religious and values education.[19]

In 1999, Wills moved to Adelaide, where he took up a position as Head of Religious and Values education at Westminster School. Concurrently, he continued his involvement with DAN. At that time, the network was very small but in the period between 1999 and 2006 his involvement, and the network, grew. An increasing amount of Wills' teaching time was consumed with the creation of professional development opportunities for teachers, and with offering ethics seminars for senior students. A hectic period, Wills spent the next six years promoting an academic approach to values education, before he was seconded to Dialogue Australasia as the executive officer. Fully immersed in DAN, Wills no longer had time for teaching. Over the course of the next five years, he dedicated his energy to promoting the organisation and presenting seminars on world religions, stillness and silence, and philosophy and religion.

Several times during the course of my literature research I was directed to DAN's educational material and website. Teachers and friends sent me emails and links. A librarian even offered to order DAN's philosophy package for me, complete with staff discount. Clearly, DAN's marketing strategies were working well and, naturally, I examined the material closely. At first, I found it confusing. Later, I came to recognise that philosophy is packaged in many ways, intersecting with all manner of religious, spiritual and lifestyle beliefs. What I call philosophy is not necessarily what others do. In the case of classical philosophy, the discipline that interests me particularly, historical links to Christianity are deeply embedded. When I first read the DAN material I dismissed it as too religious and irrelevant to my project. The group's Five Strands approach to religious and values education covers Christian education, world religions, philosophy of religion, values education, and an affective strand promoting stillness, silence, and spirituality.[20] While I found the ethos well-constructed and interesting on a personal level, I saw little in common with the new WACE PAE course that might be helpful to my research. Some months later I realised that the material I sought was often entwined with religion, a natural consequence of being taught from a Religious and Values Education perspective. During the course of my research, and these background interviews, it has become apparent that, while modern philosophy education may strive to be secular, there is a tenacious historical connection to religion that resists separation.

Missing the classroom and eager to return to teaching, Wills accepted a position as Head of Philosophy, Values and Religion at Hale School in Western Australia and resigned from his position as executive officer for Dialogue Australasia in 2007.

Together with Hale's Gifted and Talented Coordinator, Leanne Rucks, Wills introduced PAE to the upper school and began the development of the Philosothon concept. He emphasises: 'Like any good idea, it was two people putting their heads together'.

However, the introduction of a new subject to a school with deeply entrenched traditions was not easy. Wills and Rucks had to work hard to find a place for philosophy within the established Hale system that has guided upper secondary students from high school to university so successfully. Promotion of the subject became a priority. They understood that the key to PAE's acceptance lay in their ability to highlight a credible and calculable link to university entry. Without this, Hale School was unlikely to take any new subject seriously. While Wills was eager to promote PAE in order to provide his students with more course options, he recognised that Rucks' enthusiasm stemmed from a desire to extend her Gifted and Talented students. He asserts: '[philosophy] lends itself to Gifted and Talented students because they like to throw around abstract concepts and ideas in a way that other students often find really difficult to grasp.'

In its earliest incarnation, the Philosothon was a fairly modest event, with only eight schools participating. Through his contacts with the Australasian Dialogue Network, and Leanne Rucks, Wills worked to set up an inter-school event based on the principles of the philosophical community of inquiry. Initially, interest was small, but enthusiastic. Wills explains: 'We produced a CD. We sent out letters and invitations. We produced resources to send out to people—stimulus material.' Despite a modest start, the event has become very successful. In Western Australia, the number of participating schools has grown from eight to twenty-four.

Wills believes that an attraction to philosophical argument is natural among teenagers, an innate part of their psyche. It is his firm belief that young people, particularly gifted students, love to use argumentation to explore their own ideas and understanding of the world. In 2010, two-thirds of the students who participated in the Philosothon attended schools that did not offer the new PAE course. Despite this obvious disadvantage, non-PAE students continue to compete. Wills believes that this method of formal argumentation 'helps motivate schools to want to enter into the process, because they know that their young people would enjoy it.'

During my visit to the 2010 Philosothon, the enjoyment described by Wills was particularly evident among the Year Eleven competitors. However, it was easy to differentiate the PAE students in each year group from the novices. While argumentation may be a natural characteristic of teenagers, community of inquiry skills are acquired with practice. The most fun was clearly had by those students who knew what they were doing, perhaps at the expense of schools without a PAE course. The most adept participants displayed an almost frightening proficiency with reasoning and language, a sobering lesson when I revisited my material in Philosophy for Teenagers. I made a mental note not to underestimate my readership. The clear message I took away was, 'patronise at your peril'.

In addition to the benefits for students, Wills is also convinced that many Religious and Values teachers find the Philosothon attractive because it provides credibility for a subject area that does not always get the recognition he thinks it deserves. Wills believes that the philosophy element of religious and values education gives some academic credibility to a subject area which, in reality, is not always held in a high esteem. He claims: 'Even though in the publicity, and all the documentation, they [schools] talk a lot about the importance of religious and values education, the reality is that that's not what goes on in the timetable.'

Regardless of the underlying motivations of schools, students or teachers for participating in the Philosothon, there is no doubt that the event is growing. In the 2010 Philosothon, four half-hour communities of inquiry were conducted, during which students, ranging from Years Eight to Eleven, spiritedly defined and discussed questions such as 'Do we own our bodies?', 'Is faith reasonable?' and 'Why obey laws?' The contributions from participants were largely unrehearsed, although some had clearly invested more time than others in the recommended pre-Philosothon reading material. Some were a little shy, while others spoke with more confidence. Despite the natural differences one would expect to find among any group, there was a noticeable lack of competition in the room. There was teamwork and cooperation as students struggled to articulate their responses. Of course, the subjugation of ego is part of the rationale for a community of inquiry, and I imagine that the most confident students are generally those who best understand the rules. Badgering, bullying, interrupting, and any other non-collaborative behaviour is penalised with lost points. From my observation, ego is in the room—it is simply on a leash.

Given that the Philosothon aims to promote 'clear and logical thinking, to identify the values, concepts and assumptions underlying an argument, and to apply careful analysis to significant moral, political or social issues' in an environment of mutual respect and tolerance, one would assume that the event would be without critics.[21] Not so. The student discussions are based on the philosophical community of inquiry (COI), a model that rejects any form of adversarial intercourse in favour of communal problem-solving. Community of inquiry is not the same process as debate. However, in 2010, as in previous Philosothons, winners were judged and trophies awarded. For some members of the school and academic community the Philosothon is an uneasy fit, a competition based on non-competitive principles. To those critics of the Philosothon, Wills is unapologetic. He justifies: 'The competition side of it is just a mechanism to foster interest and encourage students to work at the highest level we can.'

Wills maintains that the COI is the important part of the Philosothon process, not the competition. The process provides an opportunity for students to practise their COI skills with students outside their usual cohort, and to experience fresh challenges to their thinking. From the perspective of promotion, the Philosothon also provides schools, in particular the host school, with a platform for parents, teachers, and the media to witness COI in action. The event promotes the idea of critical reasoning and, more recently, the new PAE course. Wills notes that: 'Students come up with incredibly insightful, in-depth understandings of really difficult, complex issues that would boggle the minds of people triple their own age.'

Watching participants aged thirteen to seventeen compete in the Philosothon has provided me with valuable insights into the differing abilities, and relative maturity, of adolescent students. In my writing, it has helped me to gauge more effectively the capacity of students to understand and relate to the narratives I offer in Philosophy for Teenagers. It has also provided me with live examples of COI in action. This has been crucial to my understanding and illustration of this practice in More Than a Moving Mouth, a chapter dedicated to the COI method. Reviewed by Year Eleven students in a focus group study, my initial portrayal of an in-class COI received criticism due to its lack of realism. Hopefully, my experience at the Philosothon has helped to fix this problem.

Wills describes the Philosothon as having 'a life of its own now'. It is a concept that he, and others interested in fostering philosophy education in Australia, hoped might catch the imagination of other states. This appears to have happened, with a dedicated website, the participation of three more states and, in July 2011, the first national Philosothon was held at Cranbrook School in Sydney. On a recent trip to the United States, primarily to gain ideas and inspiration for the Philosothon model, Wills saw little activity aimed at secondary philosophy education. The annual US Ethics Bowl bears some resemblance to the Australian Philosothon, but differs in the demographic of its participants and objectives. The Ethics Bowl gathers teams from universities around the country in order to argue ethical issues. The event begins with a series of state competitions and progresses to a national level. It is adversarial, more a debate than a community of inquiry.

Wills assesses the current state of interest in philosophy and ethics in the US as poor, and does not believe that the US education system is likely to embrace the subject in the near future. As such, the Australian Philosothon model is unlikely to generate significant interest. However, he is more hopeful about the interest in philosophy and ethics in the United Kingdom. Six years ago, on a previous fellowship, Wills travelled to the UK to study Philosophy and Religious Education models. Time spent at primary and high schools has convinced Wills that the Philosothon concept is more likely to fit in with English educational rationales, rather than with those of the US.

With the Philosothon established, Wills can now concentrate on teaching the new Philosophy and Ethics course. He considers the community of inquiry to be of particular benefit to boys, who often have difficulty with written expression. Wills' opinion echoes that of Stephan Millett, who also noted the difficulty some boys experienced in translating their thoughts to the page. Wills explains: 'You read their material and think, "you know what you're talking about but you can't explain yourself —you just can't get it down on paper". You get them in a community of inquiry environment and they just shine.'

Wills believes that the separation of the WACE Philosophy and Ethics and Religion and Life courses was a prudent decision. Drawing on his experience of teaching the Studies of Religion course offered at Knox Grammar in Sydney and Westminster School in Adelaide, Wills compares the Studies of Religion course with the new Western

Australian Religion and Life course. According to Wills, the new course employs a phenomenological approach, concentrating primarily on philosophy of religion. He believes that, while this is valuable, 'I don't think it has the same practical out-workings, the same benefits [as PAE].'

As I mentioned earlier, it is hard to disentangle the historical influence of religion from modern philosophy, and yet I feel compelled to keep asking questions about it. As the researcher of a potential philosophy textbook, I wanted to understand where I should, or should not, go. I wondered if I must 'choose a side'. For example, could I speculate on the nature of death without considering the possibility of an afterlife? Could I talk about the problem of evil without at least a nod to God? As a writer using the PAE syllabus as a framework for content, was religion a 'no-go zone'? I sensed an air of political correctness in these discussions, and the creeping sensation that, while these courses might be amiably compared, they were, in reality, mutually and emotionally exclusive. Some academics feel it is not credible to teach a course based on critical reasoning and logic, while simultaneously accepting the role of a scientifically-unproven God (or gods). They consider it, well, illogical. Conversely, other religious educators believe that a philosophy and ethics course that does not factor in the possibility of a yet unexplained spiritual realm may place students in religious conflict. Unlike the natural marriage of history and politics, or anthropology and psychology, the traditional partnership of philosophy and religion appears to be devolving. My interviews, with Wills and other philosophy educators, led me to consider carefully where, and how, religion makes an appearance in Philosophy for Teenagers. Despite my delight in mixing one with the other, pragmatism demands a lighter hand. In Philosophy for Teenagers, God makes brief appearances only.

Wills is on the Assessment Review and Moderation (ARM) panel for Philosophy and Ethics, the Curriculum Council's working body that looks at revising curriculum. The panel is currently in the process of revising the content of Philosophy and Ethics, where Wills believes it will respond to the feedback of teachers who have indicated that there is simply too much material to cover. He adds that he would like to see more on ethics, particularly in the areas of environmental and bio-ethics, as these are areas that appeal to secondary students. This observation complements the notion that adolescents respond to ideas that can be applied to their own lives and circumstances. Creativity and

imagination are essential in order for teenagers to engage with the yet-unseen ethical dilemmas of their own futures. Wills criticises: 'There's nothing on bio-ethics. There's nothing on genetic engineering. These are things that young people really do like to get their teeth into. There's nothing on environmental ethics which, in today's age, is really important.'

When Stephan Millett described the process of drafting the new PAE curriculum he referred to it as a 'Procrustean' effort. Philosophy is a broad discipline and the PAE syllabus reflects this. Deciding what to include, and what to leave out, is a daunting endeavour. While the ARM panel may be considering how to trim the course, I have been thinking about how I can extend my textbook to include more content, beyond the requirements of my thesis. Wills' references to disciplines such as bio-ethics and genetic engineering resonate with my own interests in science, and provide a natural partnership with philosophy and ethics. For example, advances in communication, medicine, energy, and environmental technologies will always give rise to the three fundamental questions of philosophy employed in PAE. As long as human beings face mysteries and challenges they will be spurred to ask questions such as, 'How can we make this work?', 'How do we know when we've got it right?' and, 'Now that we know how to do it, are there consequences to consider?' The possibilities for creating stimulus material by weaving scientific questions with philosophy are exciting, limitless and fully adaptable to changes in the PAE syllabus.

Of course, PAE must first prove itself as a viable option to students, parents and schools if it is to survive the subject selection process. Wills is no stranger to the difficulty of finding support for less mainstream subjects, particularly those at upper secondary level. He observes: 'I can think of some teachers that see it as a Mickey Mouse subject and a waste of time, and other teachers who obviously value it, and encourage their students to do it if they feel they are capable of doing it.' He acknowledges that schools, career counsellors and parents are often reluctant to direct students away from more proven pathways, but believes that interest for Philosophy and Ethics will grow as much from the students as from any other source. Given the enthusiasm he witnesses among his own students, together with the measurable popularity of the Philosothon, Wills feels positive about the future of philosophy education in Western Australia. He also makes the point that, as more parents become university educated, there is likely to be less negativity or mystery surrounding the subject. He claims: 'That whole area is really

foundational to a whole raft of subjects. A lot of our parents have been through university and have done philosophy. They already have an appreciation.'[22]

Leanne Rucks: philosophy for gifted and talented students

Leanne Rucks is passionate about teaching gifted students. She is a Level Three classroom teacher, the winner of a National Excellence in Teaching Award (NEiTA), and a tireless advocate of philosophy and ethics education. So, in 2007, with ten years of experience in the state school system as an academic talent program coordinator, it was not surprising that Rucks was recruited by the prestigious Hale School as their new Challenge Programme Coordinator.

For Rucks, the key challenge in establishing a Gifted and Talented programme for secondary students at Hale School lay in the problem of curriculum differentiation, or how to modify existing curriculum and teaching practices to cater for the individual needs of gifted students within a classroom. Equipped with the Maker Model of Curriculum Differentiation, Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development, a gifted-modified Bloom's Taxonomy, and the Williams Cognitive-Affective Interaction Model, Rucks set out to develop a programme that would challenge and inspire her gifted students.

Rucks prefers the Williams Model when working with gifted and talented students, representing it as a reversed version of the Bloom's Taxonomy. She explains: 'Bloom's Taxonomy is presented as a pyramid. At the very top you have synthesis and evaluation, the higher-order thinking. Down at the bottom is just basic comprehension and the ability to regurgitate exactly what you've been taught. With gifted students, you turn it upside down.' The Williams Model emphasises evaluation rather than the accumulation of raw knowledge. It promotes sixteen specific strategies to facilitate comprehension that include the recognition of paradox, attribute listing, the use of analogies, locating discrepancies, provocative questioning, examples of change and habit, the development of search skills, intuitive expression, and developing tolerance for ambiguity[23]. As a Gifted and Talented teacher, Rucks believes that this model is ideal for working with a gifted student but difficult to implement due to the many dimensions to be catered for. Until I heard Rucks' story, I had not considered fully the role of Gifted and Talented teaching in philosophy education. During my reading research, and in other interviews,

the particular needs of extension students were mentioned rarely. While some acknowledged a casual connection between philosophy and 'bright kids', these references often referred to philosophy students specifically. They did not speak of the needs of Gifted and Talented teachers, or their students. Rucks' particular experience showed me how extension programs intersect naturally with the study of philosophy. The abstract concepts and thinking inherent in philosophy training provide a vehicle for delivering the sorts of extension material needed for these programs. To me, this was pure pragmatism at work. Rucks wanted a way to implement the Williams Model and this led her to the philosophical community of inquiry, a tool that underpins the entire PAE rationale. In her role as a Gifted and Talented teacher, PAE represented an expedient package that could be unbundled and picked over to suit the needs of an extension program. This led me to consider those elements within the philosophy curriculum that might also be valuable for Gifted and Talented programs. In particular, the philosophical community of inquiry provides opportunities to analyse, clarify and evaluate issues using critical and creative methods, while the fictional illustrations in Philosophy for Teenagers employs analogy and imagination to communicate concepts. My interview with Matthew Wills highlighted the common ground that exists between religious studies and philosophy, while my discussion with Rucks demonstrated the intersection of Gifted and Talented programs with philosophy education.

Rucks quickly found both inspiration and ally in Sara Thorpe, Hale School's Gifted Coordinator in the junior school at that time. Thorpe conceived and instituted a lunchtime philosophy café for some of Hale's youngest gifted students, an idea that would later provide the catalyst for the Philosothon concept. The café enabled students to practise the basic community of inquiry skills being taught as part of the junior school's Gifted and Talented programme. Rucks remembers: 'The first round of her [Thorpe's] gifted boys were coming up to the secondary school. Sara said, "If you don't establish a philosophy café they're going to feel really deprived".'

Establishing a philosophy café in the secondary school was problematic in an institution where activities are so tightly scheduled. She met resistance. According to Rucks, it was difficult to convince those in authority of the need or value of such an endeavour, a difficulty reflected by others seeking to find room for philosophy within a more traditional curriculum. However, her frustration with this attitude did not prevent her from finding other connections between the discipline of philosophy and the needs of

her gifted students. In particular, Rucks found that philosophical concepts and questioning complemented the Williams Model effectively. She believes: 'Philosophy embodies those "what if?" questions. The philosophy course gave us the content that fitted that educational model of teaching which is ideally suited to the needs of the gifted learner.'

Despite scheduling difficulties, and some political opposition to the philosophy café concept, Rucks eventually succeeded in setting up a club for secondary students. Interested boys met twice weekly to discuss all manner of 'wicked problems', a term first introduced by Berkeley professors Horst Rittel and Melvin Webber. Rittel and Webber describe the 'wicked' problem as one where 'the information needed to understand the problem depends upon one's idea for solving it.'[24] Every wicked problem is unique, itself a symptom of a pre-existing problem. Utilising the philosophical community of inquiry, the philosophy café provided a forum for gifted students to develop skills and rational strategies recommended by the Williams Model. In an address made to the Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented conference in 2008, Rucks said: 'The community of inquiry model dovetails effectively into the William's Model of Differentiation, as the approach encourages fluent, flexible, original and elaborative thinking, and utilises paradoxes, attributions and provocative questioning as an inherent aspect of the process.'

Rucks' philosophy café was conducted twice-weekly by a leadership group comprising one representative per year group and a representative from each of the Year Ten and Eleven philosophy classes. A Year Twelve captain was appointed to oversee the group. Rucks explained that the leadership group was 'encouraged to take ownership for the club and, in regular meetings, sponsor ideas to shape future directions and generate topics for each semester's communities of inquiry.'[25] The open-age policy of the philosophy club allowed like-minded peers to interact, regardless of their year group.

Effective philosophical communities of inquiry can last for hours, or even days. Rucks found that the inherent time constraints of the philosophy café meant that sessions needed to be divided in terms of their purpose and focus. The first week in each session centred on the development of suitable questions for discussion, while the following week was dedicated to a community of inquiry on the question selected. Rucks also

employed technology as an aid to overcoming the limited time available for the cafés. Questions were placed on a discussion forum, the proceedings were videoed and then placed on the school's internal information technology network. This allowed the club to continue its discussion and conduct its community of inquiry online. Teachers avoided any moderation of the group's comments and allowed the internal leadership of the club to deal with inappropriate discussions. This deliberate avoidance of adult censorship encouraged students to take responsibility for the impact of their interactions.

However, the implementation of a philosophy café in the secondary school did not come without cost. Hired to develop a gifted and talented program, Rucks believes her plans were impeded by opposition within the school. Frustrated, she circumvented resistance and 'subversively established the philosophy café.' Rucks recalls, 'The philosophy café enabled at least some initiation of higher thinking,' in what she feels is a gender-biased, traditionalist environment with only a superficial interest in gifted and talented education. Rucks says that absence of support for classroom strategies that offered curriculum differentiation, and to the professional development such strategies would entail, compelled her to look for alternative pathways for entry into the Hale School curriculum. Rucks recognised that the study of philosophy already provided excellent stimulus material and a ready-made pedagogical scaffolding for gifted and talented education. Together with then Director of Curriculum Michael Giles, she turned her attention towards driving philosophy into the curriculum—the potential key to developing a gifted and talented programme. She said: 'If I could wedge philosophy into the school, I could wedge in the Williams model by default. Basically, I was riding curriculum differentiation on philosophy because I couldn't do it any other way.'

In addition to the need for differentiation in classrooms, and with the partnership of the new Head of Philosophy, Values and Religion, Matthew Wills, Rucks also saw an opportunity to promote moral reasoning among the student body. Rucks states: 'In an all-boys school with an emphasis on Christian values, the school's pastoral care process is constantly seeking to encourage community cohesion, and staff and student leaders within the community actively take ownership of the on-going development of moral reasoning.' Rucks believes that confronting 'wicked problems' helps students understand and empathise with the perspectives of others in society.

Following the success of the philosophy café for secondary students, Rucks continued her search to extend the idea of combining philosophy with the Williams Model. She felt that, while the lunchtime meetings were an excellent way for gifted boys to flex their community of inquiry skills, participants were limited by a small and familiar membership. Generally, the same students attended weekly, many of whom had previously been involved in Sara Thorpe's junior school initiative. Participants knew what to expect of each other in terms of opinion and personal style. Discussions fell into predictable patterns. Students often retreated into comfortable and familiar arguments. Rucks believed that, in order for the members of the philosophy café to maintain the high level of imagination and creativity needed for its success, innovation was required.

Inspired by a speech by Canadian educationalist Françoys Gagné, Rucks proposed an inter-school community of inquiry that she hoped would provide opportunities for her gifted and talented students to interact with peers at other schools. She recalls:

> When I saw and heard Gagné speak in January 2006, I was very
> interested by his comments on the value of the acquisition of knowledge
> and the need for competition for gifted students. I had also noted my
> students' enjoyment of the thrill of competition with other "like-minds".

Rucks' emphasis on the competitive aspect of the Philosothon sits uneasily with me. It is reminiscent of Matthew Wills' similar, yet more pragmatic, view about the contradictory nature of competition and communities of inquiry. Throughout the development of the Philosothon concept, it is important to note that Rucks' primary interest lay in providing a program for her gifted and talented students.

Proposed in 1991, Gagné's Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT) has been an influential model in the education of gifted students in Australia. DMGT distinguishes between 'giftedness', innate or natural abilities that place a student within the top ten percent of their cohort, and 'talents', which represent systematically developed abilities placing an individual in the top ten percent of people who have been active in that same field.[26] Rucks, searching for opportunities to cultivate the talents of her own gifted students, drew on Gagné's notion that talent development hinges, in part, upon intrapersonal catalysts, which divided into the physical and the psychological. Among the psychological catalysts, Gagné theorises that 'motivation and volition play a

crucial role in initiating the process of talent development, guiding it, and sustaining it through obstacles, boredom and occasional failure.'[27]

The idea of the interpersonal becoming the intrapersonal was a repeating theme throughout the interviews, and presented one of the most difficult challenges of my thesis. In modern philosophy education, the practice of COI represents the embodiment of this theory. Rucks saw the COI as a pathway to develop intrapersonal skills in her gifted students, while Millett and Wills used it as a device for communal problem solving. There was no getting around its significance in the philosophy classroom. However, the stubborn question remained: 'How can I incorporate the essence of the philosophical community of inquiry into a book?' Reading is a solitary activity. Silently, we decipher the words on the page and then reflect on their meaning. This process takes place on an individual level. A community of inquiry requires others to participate in the unravelling of a question. During the Philosothon, I watched as students struggled to articulate their thoughts. The process was slow and sometimes painful to witness but, incrementally, students verbalised a question armed with their COI tools. Ultimately, individual understanding emerged, built on the insights of others. Often, someone who had previously been quiet made a contribution at the end of the discussion. The interpersonal became the intrapersonal, and the fragments of understanding coalesced within, and between, the participants. Obviously, written text cannot duplicate the dynamic nature of live discussion, but I do think it is possible to produce narratives that provide viewpoints that are *likely* to differ from the reader's experience. In Philosophy for Teenagers, the interpersonal element is provided by fictional characters and experiences. In particular, the Emails to Miss Ong series is intended to complement, rather than replicate, the COI experience.

The original concept and name of the Philosothon were conceived by Rucks, who later developed the event in partnership with Matthew Wills. In 2007, the first Philosothon was held at Hale School, the event facilitated and judged by tertiary-level academics. Rucks believes that the partnerships forged with school philosophy clubs have been invaluable, and that competing in the Philosothon has 'allowed a comparison of models and approaches, strengthening the [Hale] club: 'The impact of these initiatives has been measurable within the school community and demonstrably met the need for the intellectual challenge of the gifted boys. As a case study in differentiation, the development of philosophy at Hale School has been an enormous success.'[28] Rucks'

experiences in the development of the Philosothon, together with her perspective as a Gifted and Talented teacher, have helped me to identify how gifted students might find their way into a PAE class, and the needs and motivations of the specialist teachers behind them.

Raymond Driehuis: making philosophy education work

Dr Raymond Driehuis describes his high school experience with characteristic candour: 'I never finished high school. I left at the end of Year Eleven with some reasonably good results in terms one, two and three...and by term four I decided was going to rebel and I completely crashed and burned anything I had. Then I left.' The irony in this abrupt end to Driehuis' own high school days lies in the fact that his personal journey led him back to study and into a career in education. Currently a teacher of philosophy and ethics at Perth Modern School, Driehuis holds an Honours degree in English, a Graduate Diploma in Education, a PhD in English, and he is currently completing a Masters in Educational Measurement.

One semester into his undergraduate year, at the age of twenty-two, Driehuis knew that he wanted to study a combination of English and philosophy. He recalls: 'I discovered that I actually liked philosophy, and I understood and liked what it was about. It was something I had been doing quite naturally without necessarily knowing what I was doing.' Driehuis believes that philosophy suits those students who have an enquiring mind, those who like to analyse and deconstruct the world around them. To him, this is the prime prerequisite needed in order to study philosophy. In his experience, students who do not enjoy asking 'what if?', cannot see the subject's merit.

At age twenty-six, while completing coursework for a PhD at Edith Cowan University, Driehuis had the opportunity to teach a course in language and culture. This led to the discovery that he 'felt quite at home' in teaching, a surprise for someone who openly admits that he 'hated school'. Upon completing his PhD and a diploma in education, he took up a teaching position at Guildford Grammar School and taught English for five years. During that period Driehuis had little opportunity to indulge his passion for philosophy, but was invited to participate in the development of a new concept curriculum in English. This is a project he describes as 'a philosophical approach to teaching English,' and it was a reminder of the direction he wanted his career to take.

Driehuis moved on to teach at Edgewater High School, and later Mater Dei College, where he became directly involved in the development of the WACE Philosophy and Ethics course. Invited to join a group of philosophy academics and educators, he became aware of the curriculum development that was already underway and also found opportunities to exercise his enthusiasm for philosophy: 'We [the group] met once a fortnight to discuss many works on moral and political philosophy, and it has been an incredible extension to my education.'

Through his new and refreshed connections with the philosophy community, Driehuis was offered a role that would eventually see him provide a practical teaching framework for the recently-written syllabus. Following the agreement on a course consultation draft for PAE by the reference group in 2005, Driehuis was offered the task of action research by the Curriculum Council. The research was conducted with a small group of students and involved the development of a condensed version of the PAE course. The aim was to trial levels, create assessment tasks, and examine possible methods of measurement, essentially to commence the process of transforming the PAE syllabus from theory to workable teaching practice.

In 2007, Driehuis accepted the permanent position of 'Curriculum and Assessment Officer - Philosophy and Ethics/Religion and Life' at the Curriculum Council in WA. Here, he continued his work to establish a teachable philosophy curriculum. His role included the provision of support for new philosophy teachers as well as training and assistance for schools interested in adding the new course to their curriculum. He was also responsible for the design and implementation of appropriate course measurement and assessment, a considerable task given the often abstract nature of the subject matter, and the fact that the course was constructed in an 'outcomes-based' environment.

Driehuis' appointment to the Curriculum Council arrived during a particularly turbulent period of resistance to the new outcomes-based curriculum. Tension and anger among teachers, particularly English teachers, was high. Strikes, walkouts and sackings were threatened as teachers disputed the readiness and quality of the new curriculum.[29] Driehuis believes it was the backlash and media attention from perceived flaws in outcomes-based education that prompted the Curriculum Council to appoint dedicated and experienced project officers to each of the new courses.

Driehuis' opportunity to teach the WACE Philosophy and Ethics course came sooner than expected, with an offer from Perth Modern School in late 2009. In an environment of cost-cutting and uncertainty generated by the Global Financial Crisis, he resigned from the Curriculum Council and accepted a teaching role in the course that his efforts were instrumental in creating. In 2011, following an intense first-year of teaching, he remains positive about the course. His highly-detailed programs are accessible to all teachers of PAE via the Curriculum Council intranet, although he admits to enjoying the freedom of stepping outside the parameters of his own guidelines occasionally. The feedback he receives from others in the philosophy education community is also positive and there is a sense that the course's early success is due not only to the solid foundations laid by course developers, but also to the general commitment and enthusiasm of high school teachers who have elected to teach the new course.

Unlike Wills or Rucks, Driehuis has not encountered resistance to the new philosophy course. He speculates, 'For the most part teachers are supportive, and that might be peculiar to a school like Mod [Perth Modern School] because it's an academically select school.' I found this an interesting observation, as Perth Modern School is not only an academically select school, but also a highly-regarded state school. Until meeting with my interviewees, I assumed that PAE's greatest champions were more likely to be located within the private school system, where extra funds could be found for the launch of new subjects. Operating in a competitive marketplace, it seems natural to me that any new 'product' must enhance the prestige of an institution, and provide parents with another point on which to differentiate between one school and another. Despite the resources available to the private school system, I sense now that the success of philosophy education may rest in the public school system where issues of religion and tradition are not as relevant. I speculate that it is the competitive nature of private education, the tyranny of league tables, and the conservatism of 'career' academics that has produced this unexpected state. I wonder if philosophy needs the relative freedom of the state school system to flourish. Certainly, the freedom to discuss God, genetic selection, euthanasia, or any other topic that determines how human beings choose to live is desirable for philosophy education and for this writer of educational materials.

Driehuis speculates that, while schools are likely to experience relatively low participation rates in PAE initially, each year that the course is run in a school there is an increased awareness and understanding of the subject among students and parents. According to Driehuis, those students who perform well in philosophy often do well in other academic areas. He anticipates slow and steady growth for PAE and believes an annual cohort of one hundred and fifty to two hundred students would indicate a healthy course. 'A small, strong group which continually performs well and scales highly would', he suggests, 'be the final self-promotion that the course needs to cement itself in the minds of school administrators.' While Driehuis believes that the separation of philosophy and religion was a necessary one, he admits it may have been at the loss of students in the Catholic sector. In agreement with many other philosophy educators, he feels that, while a course combined with the WACE Religion and Life syllabus would have guaranteed a place for philosophy in every Catholic School, both courses may have been compromised. He argues: 'Having taught RE [religious education], the problem comes from having kids in your class there as a matter of compulsion. You've got to be careful what you say. Conversely, some critics will dismiss the non-religious philosophy component of the course as 'all Catholic'philosophy'.

While Driehuis feels that separation was, and is, the more prudent pathway for the course, he questions the chosen placement of PAE within the WACE curriculum. He observes: 'If I were to criticise a decision that was made at the time by Council, or the reference group advising council, it was the placing of philosophy and ethics within Social Science.'

Effective from 2010, each of the fifty-two WACE subjects available is assigned to List A or List B, a designation intended to ensure that students conform with the Council's 'breadth and depth requirement'. List A units refer to subjects that fall within the domain of arts, languages, or social sciences, while List B units refer to mathematics, science and technology subjects. PAE is a List A subject. In order to matriculate, all secondary students must also satisfy the English language competence requirement by obtaining a passing grade in any Stage One, or higher, English unit. There are currently two English subjects available to meet this requirement, English and Literature.[30] Driehuis argues that the exacting nature of PAE, in comprehension, critical thinking and expression, makes it a perfect third option for the English language competence requirement. He explains: 'It sits in both [English and Social Science] areas

comfortably.' Given my research into PAE, I am inclined to agree with Driehuis' assessment. According to the course outcomes described in the current WACE English syllabus, a competent student should be able to listen and speak with purpose, read and view a wide range of texts with purpose, understanding and critical awareness, and write 'for a range of purposes and in a range of forms using conventions appropriate to audience, purpose and context'.[31] In my opinion, these aims intersect significantly with the current PAE course. A student who successfully achieves the required outcomes of PAE simultaneously satisfies the WACE English language competence requirement. Driehuis believes that, while there is nothing inherently wrong with having Philosophy and Ethics grouped with the social sciences, it is simply a lost strategic opportunity: 'Most of the teachers out there who tend to gravitate toward teaching philosophy, if they have a background in philosophy, even if it's combined with something else, usually have a strength in English.'

Driehuis considers the annual Philosothon, an event he has facilitated or judged since its inception, to be an excellent vehicle for exposing the new course to students and parents. He stresses: 'It has brought academics into it from universities and let them see that this is a serious and credible course'. Ultimately, however, the future success of PAE will depend on enrolments, a factor that in turn relies heavily upon the opinions and attitudes of philosophy students towards the subject. To date, the feedback which Driehuis has received from both students and teachers has been positive. He believes this augurs well for the viability of philosophy, as future graduates of the subject relay their positive experiences to younger siblings and friends.

However, while this slowly evolving interest from among students can be viewed as a positive sign, it must be matched with interest from potential teachers if the course is to survive long-term. I believe that teachers will be more inclined to teach the subject, which requires a sizeable investment of time and energy in professional development, if more support and variety in terms of teaching materials is forthcoming. PAE is new to the WACE curriculum. There is no accumulation or store of appropriate philosophy texts upon which teachers may build their lesson plans. Currently, philosophy teachers must sift through an undifferentiated selection of philosophy texts in order to locate materials that are appropriate for the course and its narrow demographic. Potential philosophy teachers already face steep challenges in the acquisition and comprehension

of the fundamental concepts of a syllabus that, by its often abstract nature, can be difficult to master. Facilitating a community of inquiry, the foundation of contemporary critical thinking activities requires fine, almost intuitive, judgement. New teachers of the subject may struggle, but without trained, willing and well-supported philosophy teachers there can be no PAE course.[32]

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Chapter 2: Methodology

In the earliest phase of my research, I endeavoured to familiarise myself with the Philosophy and Ethics course offered under the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE). As the creative project was to be designed around the framework of a fixed syllabus, it was crucial to become fully conversant with its content and required learning outcomes. In addition to the course, it was also essential to identify the materials currently available to teenage philosophy students in Western Australia. I commenced this investigation with the online learning and support resources referred to on the Council's online support extranet.

The extranet supplies a weblink to a list of resources recommended for teachers seeking material with which to teach the new PAE course. This list was an excellent starting point for my reading as it provided a wide selection of philosophy texts that were recommended by the Council and deemed as suitable for the course. With the exception of a suite of three texts produced by the designers of the course and intended to accompany each of the three stages of the curriculum, none of the resources I examined was entirely suitable for a teenaged readership. I found that most of the texts listed contained language and examples more appropriate for tertiary students, while many of the more general 'introductory' philosophy texts demanded a level of maturity and life experience unlikely to be found among even the most gifted upper secondary students. While it could be argued that many of the texts on offer were not intended for direct use by the student, but rather as an aid to teachers in the preparation of lessons, I found little evidence of material that effectively bridged the resource 'gap' between the needs of teachers and those of students.

The WACE Philosophy and Ethics course offers students units of study in three stages, or levels, of complexity. The focus of my creative project is to produce a blend of selected content from Stages Two and Three of the course. This decision arose primarily from the prescribed thesis limit of 70,000 words. While it is indeed possible to cover every concept described in the syllabus for one of these stages within the word limit, I am convinced that the resultant text would lack depth and originality. Given this inherent constraint, my aim was to produce a textbook that

- contributes to the limited pool of purpose-written resources for the WACE Philosophy and Ethics course

- provides a significant proportion of stimulus material, to support and enhance the teaching and learning of philosophical concepts

- offers students a textbook that has been researched and developed for adolescent learners, through the use of fictional scenarios and examples designed to resonate with, and inspire, a teenaged readership

- offers teachers a textbook that addresses many of the key learning outcomes of the course, while also providing stimulus material to challenge their students, and

- provides an engaging and accessible introduction to the discipline of Philosophy and Ethics, written in an informal style.

The selection of content for the creative project was based on the notion of providing the maximum possible content mandated by the course, while leaving sufficient opportunity to incorporate fictional components. In order to determine which course content to keep, and which areas to sacrifice, I researched a wide variety of introductory philosophy texts and mapped fundamental concepts that appeared in the majority of these works. These concepts were then linked and compared with essential Philosophy and Ethics outcomes contained in the curriculum. Nine distinct areas of study emerged. These areas provided a framework for the creative project, and determined the chapters in the textbook. The areas include:

1. critical thinking and formal argument
2. the philosophical community of inquiry
3. epistemology and metaphysics
4. free-will and determinism
5. ethics and moral philosophy
6. political philosophy
7. aesthetics
8. the individual, society and culture, and
9. philosophical concepts of death.

During my research, it became apparent that most textbooks contain a low ratio of stimulus material to expository material. This quality is not peculiar to philosophy textbooks, but extends to many of the traditional humanities textbooks. It is a convention of the genre. Examples, illustrations and analogies are sufficient to illustrate a concept adequately, but fall short of igniting the imagination. Instinctively, I felt that this component of the learning process was not given the energy or attention it deserved, particularly for a teenaged readership. However, it was necessary to validate this hypothesis before I could reasonably proceed with my plans to try to expand the boundaries of traditional textbook convention.

My research into the teaching and learning pedagogies of philosophy for children and young adults commenced with the work of Matthew Lipman. Lipman is credited with being the 'founder of the modern philosophy for children movement' and his pedagogical model for the teaching of critical and philosophical thinking to children has been widely employed in schools across the United States and Europe. In an interview given in 2003, Lipman explained that his 'Philosophy for Children' (P4C) pedagogy is 'built upon the recommendations of John Dewey and the Russian educator Lev Vygotsky, who emphasised the necessity to teach for thinking, not just for memorizing.'[1] In this interview, Lipman also discusses the work of several philosophers and educational and social psychologists that have influenced his thinking, ultimately contributing to the P4C program. Notably, Lipman mentions the work of Piaget, Buchler, Ryle, and Wittgenstein, particularly for their theories regarding the connections between thinking, language and emotional expression. Lipman refers to 'the importance of artistic creativity in getting the child to be emotionally expressive' and stresses that 'good thinking can be charged with imagination, as when we enter whole-heartedly into a story, or develop a hypothesis.'[2] In *Thinking in Education*, Lipman argues further that students need 'as textbooks, narratives instead of sourcebooks of information, so that growth and development, with recurrent themes and variations, can be constantly before their eyes.'[3]

Others have advocated the idea of a creative component in the teaching of philosophy to children. An essential part of the process of critical thinking and problem-solving is the ability to access and utilise the imagination. According to Fisher:

> The power of stories resides in their ability to create possible worlds as objects of intellectual enquiry. Stories liberate us from the here-and-now, they are intellectual constructions, but they are also life-like. They are intellectually challenging, but also embedded in human concerns. Stories provide a means to understand the world and to understand ourselves.[4]

Similarly, Burgh, Field, and Freakley argue:

> Scenarios place the audience at the centre of the ethical deliberation, which might be confronting but also would appear to be useful in that teachers will experience difficult ethical situations at times and it is better to be prepared as much as possible. One way to present material as a scenario is to follow up a narrative with a question, like "What would you do if you were in X's situation?[5]

Lipman explains that, as a professor in the late 1960s, he felt that his tertiary-level students often lacked 'in reasoning and judgement, but that it was too late to improve their thinking considerably.'[6] Lipman felt that much earlier intervention was required. The P4C program is a practical incarnation of that idea, providing comprehensive, age-appropriate philosophy training for primary school students. So, while encouraged by such observations, P4C does not distinguish children from adolescents, or attempt to address the needs of young adults studying philosophy for the first time. For the sixteen-year-old student of philosophy, Lipman's ideal of the narrative textbook is virtually non-existent. There is an enormous disparity between philosophy books written for an adult market and those designed for children. Within this gap, resides the teenager.

How, then, might a textbook look if constructed specifically for adolescents? In which ways would a textbook for teenaged students differ from one designed for adults? How could creative stimulus material be interwoven, without distracting from, confusing, or possibly 'dumbing down' the core concepts? Clearly, engaging the imagination of students is an important component in the teaching and learning of philosophical ideas but, ultimately, students must also be provided with enough information to pass examinations. Somewhere between Lipman's *Kio and Gus* and Kant's *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals* stood some unexamined ground. Traditionally, philosophy units offered at university, particularly those studied in first year, are entry-level introductions to the discipline. Prior to 2008, most university students in Western Australia arrived at the subject as 'philosophy novices'. Today,

given the advent of PAE, the novice may not be an adult. My conviction that introductory texts designed for adults are often inappropriate for a teenaged readership has been reinforced by reading those texts currently recommended for students at secondary level.

Lipman's ideal of the narrative textbook provided two distinct challenges. The first was how to differentiate my textbook from the conventional elements found in the majority of social science textbooks, without alienating the work from the genre entirely. Ultimately, I needed to determine which features to retain that would provide some measure of ease and familiarity, without compromising the integrity of the ideal. Primarily, the features I elected to keep included those that provided recognisable visual cues to the reader. Notably, related topics are grouped into chapters, with PAE course content itemised in the table of contents. Key vocabulary and concepts are highlighted and defined throughout the text. A chapter review and suggestions for further reading are provided at the end of each chapter. Together, these features provide a clear signpost that the work is a textbook.

The second challenge in the re-imagining of a philosophy textbook was to select and create the innovative components. Features were required that invited students to dream, imagine and consider philosophical scenarios in alternate ways. This was problematic, as the inherent predictability of the textbook's format needed to be offset with regular storytelling, while the very 'regularity' of the storytelling rendered the text predictable again. Ultimately, I decided that the best way to overcome this difficulty was to employ a variety of styles of storytelling within the text. Therefore, some scenarios are realistic, everyday stories rendered in a way that I hope the reader finds believable and natural, while others employ fantasy, science, bizarre factoids and urban myth to deliver their messages. The aim is to make each chapter, despite its recognisable conventions, feel surprising and spontaneous.

Ideally, some of the stories will encourage readers to draw upon their own life experience. Certainly this is the case for Emails to Miss Ong (Emails), a regularly-occurring fictional narrative designed to place philosophical concepts and ideas contained in the current chapter into an imaginative narrative form. Emails chronicle the journey of twenty-year-old Luther Bow, as he travels the world in search of answers to questions of personal identity, morality and life. Luther's emails to a former teacher

provide a fictional window through which the reader can witness philosophy in action, but are also intended as a way for students to move beyond their own culture. Based on Hannah Arendt's concept of 'going visiting',[7] Luther's travel stories encourage students to reconstruct their worldview. The process asks students to view society from outside their usual assumptions, and to move imaginatively beyond the social framework to which they are accustomed. Arendt says that 'going visiting' causes students to reassess and reconstruct their understanding of the world, by encouraging them to imagine how their own society appears from the perspective of others. It stimulates empathy and 'is a continuous work of reconstruction that we undertake because we want to understand the whole.'[8]

Sharp argues strongly that one way of 'going visiting' is to provide literature that enables students to 'enter into two aspects of another's view: the perspective of itself as well as the circumstances that give rise to this particular perspective.'[9] I believe that literature can provide an invitation to perceive the world differently, foster pluralistic thinking, and also facilitate an understanding of why people think and act the way they do. In Emails, students are offered a different worldview through the character of Luther. Each email provides an opportunity for readers to imagine themselves in Luther's place, to have experiences outside Australian cultural norms, and to ponder, with Luther, how and why others choose to live differently.

Emails was also inspired by Cam's criticism of philosophy education. He says:

> We try to teach people to comprehend the various subject matters that
> form the basis of the school curriculum—although this comprehension
> tends to rely heavily on memory work and basic routines. Yet virtually
> no attention is given to teaching people *to think well in the context of
> their lives away from school*, in those everyday social, familial and
> personal contexts in which the great bulk of decisions and actions take
> place.[10]

Together with Lipman's complaint that philosophy teaching lacked 'a creative thinking component that would engage students in imaginative thinking, and in thinking about

the imagination', Cam's observations inspired me to develop an ongoing narrative component in Philosophy for Teenagers.[11]

Reflecting common themes found in adolescent literature, the protagonist in Emails is young, uncertain of his place and purpose in life, at odds with his parents and struggling for independence.[12] Initially I thought that Luther should be teenaged, in keeping with the intended readership, but later decided that his extended travels and propensity for introspection were not credible in one so young. In Luther, I hoped to create a personality that is open to the western model of career paths and higher education, yet sensitive enough to question the traditional roles our western culture has to offer.

In Australia, it is not uncommon to finish high school and travel abroad. The 'gap year' could be seen as a modern adaptation of the nineteenth-century Grand Tour, a rite of passage where sons of the wealthy were sent to continental Europe for extended periods to complement their cultural education. While the formality of this practice has disappeared, the idea that overseas travel provides some vital component in the transition to adulthood continues to appeal. Travel promises independence and adventure. According to Desforges, 'long-haul travel is at the centre of a largely white middle-class youth identity and its representations of the world beyond home, drawing globalised spaces into the construction of localised identities.'[13] In Emails, I have drawn on this modern rite of passage in the belief that students may be inspired to imagine themselves in such settings. The imaginings I hope for are entirely plausible—Luther's emails are not sent from the moon—yet the experiences are outside the realm of studenthood.

Emails to Miss Ong is not simply a travelogue; in fact, the observations and questions he sends to Miss Ong could easily have taken place on his home soil, had the right circumstances arisen. But, like so many life-altering events, it can take a change of time and place to stimulate them. Luther ponders classic questions of metaphysics while drifting along the Nile in a felucca; of ethics while sharing the hospitality of a modern Bedouin, and of aesthetics in a crowded Tokyo subway. Luther is open, thoughtful and, at times, vulnerable. Through his stories I hope to elicit empathy. I have selected this narrative form for its similarity to a personal diary, in which observations and thoughts may go largely uncensored. The character of Miss Ong is deliberately undeveloped and the reader never witnesses a direct response to Luther's emails. She is a mere sounding

board for Luther's reflections. I believe that the uncertainty surrounding Miss Ong's responses may help to create empathy for Luther. He is young, overseas, alone, and uncertain of his future. He writes to someone who is faceless to the reader. I have tried to create a longing and loneliness in his voice, a quality that I hope will appeal to young adults. Luther's character is intended to be a deliberate counterweight to the more traditional expository elements of the textbook, and to travel beyond the everyday events that comprise an average western teenager's life.

The second way in which students can learn how to 'go visiting' is via a method that underpins contemporary philosophy education, the community of inquiry (COI). Sharp says: 'It is a caring and imaginative place where one can feel free to tell one's own story, to attend carefully to the unique stories of each other, to learn how to care for people very different from oneself and practice caring about the procedures of respectful, humane, growth-producing communal enquiry.'[14] The practice of COI and the modern approach to the teaching of philosophy are inseparable. So, despite early misgivings about how to translate the necessarily communal activity of COI onto the printed page and into the domain of the individual reader, it became imperative to find an effective way around this obstacle.

I have addressed the problem of how to include the COI in the textbook in two ways. Firstly, in keeping with the idea that the COI is a tool that may be employed to examine any philosophical concept, the first chapter of Philosophy for Teenagers is dedicated to its explanation and illustration. Entitled More than a Moving Mouth, this chapter differentiates between informal conversation, debate, and argument. It introduces the principles behind a philosophical community of inquiry. The main aims of this chapter are to distinguish the process and intent of a philosophical community of inquiry from other types of discussion and to provide a rationale and method for engaging in a COI.

In order to demonstrate the feel and flow of this activity, I have also constructed a model of a COI. The model illustrates the role of the facilitator and demonstrates the flow of dialogue between participants. Periodically, the elements of the COI model are examined in order to identify characteristics that are typical of the process. These include the tools of dialectic, elenchus, thesis, antithesis, synthesis and first principles, as well as the common impediments that may be experienced such as silence, anger,

impatience, dishonesty, confusion, and unrealistic expectations. In reality, each COI is unique. No ideal representation can be made. This construct provides students who are new to philosophical inquiry with a glimpse of what *may* happen.

In addition to a full chapter about the practice of philosophical community of inquiry, this important philosophical tool has also been incorporated throughout the textbook by the regular inclusion of Community of Inquiry boxes. These boxes, or sections, appear in each chapter and aim to provide broad and challenging questions to be discussed in a group setting, led by a facilitator or teacher. The questions closely reflect the main themes of each chapter, encouraging students to define, analyse, hypothesise and evaluate. For example, in The Farm Tools of State, a chapter dedicated to political philosophy, the reader is presented with a quotation by Aristotle, and is invited to discuss the question: 'Are human beings capable of maintaining a civil society without a fixed framework of law and order?'. The question offers students the opportunity to define terms like 'civil society', 'fixed framework', 'law', and 'order'. Employed in a classroom COI, and with the prompting of a skilful facilitator, the activity of formulating these definitions is likely to lead into questions of individuality, society, citizenship, and the rights and obligations of human beings living in a community. Fisher sees this process as the third element of reciprocity, 'the ability to "decentre" from the self, to look at the situation as if from above, which Mead calls "the generalised other".[15] The questions posed in the Community of Inquiry boxes are intended to be sufficiently broad to provide students and teachers with multiple avenues for exploration, yet specific enough to promote a detailed analysis. It is my hope that young participants in a COI will be able to disassemble and scrutinise every aspect of these questions and, with each new finding, be induced to look and question more deeply.

Much of the educational theory available regarding the philosophical community of inquiry refers to primary-aged children, rather than inquiry involving young adults. This is largely due to the considerable influence of Matthew Lipman's P4C program, and subsequent interest in the idea of a comprehensive philosophy-for-life attitude. According to Lipman, philosophy education should commence with 'any child that is capable of using language intelligibly',[16] with many proponents of the P4C program directing their research into the needs of the primary-aged student. As a result, the COI

experience for children is well-documented, but there is little research available to draw upon where adolescents are concerned.

In order to help bridge this gap, I attended a lecture by Dr Christopher Phillips, the founder of Socrates Café, in which he discussed the philosophical community of inquiry concept for adults. Socrates Café is a nonprofit organisation employing a community of inquiry approach to problem-solving. Established for more than thirteen years, the aim of Socrates Café is to provide an inclusive and democratic environment within which adults may engage in philosophical dialogue. In 1998, Phillips established the Society for Philosophical Inquiry, an organisation committed to establishing Socrates Cafés worldwide with a view to 'fomenting a more inclusive deliberative democracy'.[17] Today, hundreds of these philosophy cafés have been created, providing a wide cross-section of mainly adult citizens with a formalised forum for discussion.

In June 2009 I attended and evaluated a Socrates Café facilitated by Phillips. My aims were to identify the main differences between a philosophical community of inquiry among adults and the teacher-led COI designed for children, and to locate properties that might be relevant to teenagers specifically. Throughout the dialogue I noted the following key departures:

1. Unlike a class-centered COI, the Phillips model encourages a community vote in order to determine the original question to be discussed. Students participating in a class COI are provided with particular stimulus material and/or the topic question by the teacher.

2. While Phillips encourages everyone present to participate, the right to silence is respected. In a classroom setting this may not be feasible as it is the duty of the teacher to evaluate and assess the quality of student responses.

3. Adults have the right to withdraw from the discussion if they no longer wish to participate. Students are bound by classroom rules and must remain until dismissed.

4. Adult dialogue is largely uncensored and there is little intervention from the facilitator. Language and topics can veer suddenly into territory that might be deemed inappropriate for young adults.

While the Phillips model of the COI contains significant differences from that found in the Lipman model, there are some characteristics that could be adapted to a teenagers' discussion forum. For example, a vote among a selection of teacher-directed options is compatible with the adolescent desire for independence. Teenagers are more likely to respond positively to an offer of choice, rather than to didacticism. Similarly, there is the question of censorship. Bearing in mind that a classroom COI brings with it a certain pre-conceived framework and formality, I believe it might be beneficial to suspend some of the usual conventions of classroom discussion. Interruptions, passionate outbursts, and swearing happen occasionally, particularly in the course of an emotional discussion. A classroom COI is a teaching opportunity. I think it is unrealistic to expect that students will arrive at such discussions equipped to suspend their emotions fully. Students must feel secure in the knowledge that they will not be 'in trouble' if they become overwhelmed emotionally by a topic. Teenagers are keen to explore the boundaries of their world. Within the framework of a well-modulated COI, there is an opportunity to explore topics and employ language that would usually stand outside the norm.

Another feature of the textbook is the Get-a-grip box. Located in each chapter, Get-a-grip boxes are mental rest-stops that invite readers to pause and consolidate knowledge gained from the chapter. They are designed to encourage readers to write down their observations and thoughts well before the end of the chapter. These boxes contain questions that encourage the student to connect the philosophical concepts discussed in the expository material to events in the student's own life. For example, in More Equal than You, a chapter that discusses the interrelationship between the individual and society, the reader is asked to compare his or her society with one that is different, and to consider how each society is structured around core values and beliefs. These activities are intended to encourage the first level of reciprocity, the notion that autonomy of thinking begins with the self and, if nurtured, will evolve from the personal to the social. According to Fisher, it is important to direct students towards an independence of judgement by fostering autonomy of thought, willingness for self-correction and responsibility for thoughts and actions[18]. Get-a-grip activities ask readers to explore their personal relationship with core philosophical concepts in order to establish this first level of reciprocity and, later, to encourage a sense of connectedness and empathy with others.

NOTES

[1] S Naji, Interview with Matthew Lipman Part 1: The IAPC Program Part 2, 2003.
Retrieved June 20, 2010 from http://www.buf.no/en/read/txt?page=sn-lip

[2] ibid.

[3] M Lipman, *Thinking in Education*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003.

[4] R Fisher, *Teaching Thinking: Philosophical enquiry in the classroom*, Continuum, London, 2008.

[5] G Burgh, T Field & M Freakley, *Ethics and The Community Of Inquiry: Education for Deliberative Democracy*. Cengage Learning, South Melbourne, Victoria, 2006.

[6] S Naji, Interview with Matthew Lipman Part 1: The IAPC Program Part 2, 2003.
Retrieved June 20, 2010 from http://www.buf.no/en/read/txt?page=sn-lip

[7] H Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, Viking Penguin, New York, 1961.

[8] A M Sharp, Making Better Judgements, in P Hannam & E Echeverria, foreward in *Philosophy with Teenagers*, Network Continuum, New York, 2009.

[9] ibid.

[10] P Cam, *Twenty Thinking Tools,* ACER Press, Camberwell, Victoria, 2006.

[11] M Lipman, *Thinking in Education*, 2nd edn., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003.

[12] E H Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crises*, Norton, New York, 1968.

[13] L Desforges, Checking Out the Planet, in T Skelton & G Valentine (eds), *Cool Places: Geographies of youth cultures*, Routledge, London, 1998, p. 191.

[14] A M Sharp, Making Better Judgements, in P Hannam & E Echeverria, foreward in *Philosophy with Teenagers*, Network Continuum, New York, 2009.

[15] R Fisher, *Teaching Thinking: Philosophical enquiry in the classroom*, 3rd edn., Continuum International Publishing Group, London, 2008.

[16] S Naji, Interview with Matthew Lipman Part 1: The IAPC Program Part 2, 2003.
Retrieved June 20, 2010 from http://www.buf.no/en/read/txt?page=sn-lip

[17] C Phillips, 'Socratizing and Education for Deliberative Democracy', Presentation at Curtin University, Perth, Western Australia, June 2009.

[18] R Fisher, *Teaching Thinking: Philosophical enquiry in the classroom*, 3rd edn., Continuum International Publishing Group, London, 2008.

Chapter 3: Background Reading

At the beginning of this project it seemed to me that the scope of works to be read was so vast as to include everything except, perhaps, ballroom dancing. In this judgement, I was wrong. In Chapter One of Philosophy for Teenagers, in a discussion about travel, I make reference to the tango. At the time, I remember it seemed just right. In a book that encourages students to consider their humanity through narrative and illustration, it appeared there was no subject I could afford to ignore. As a consequence, I read a great deal. While I am certain that the sum total of my reading research was no more extensive than that of, say, a candidate writing about the interdune corridors of Coongie Lakes, or the habitats of stoats, I suspect it may have been more eclectic. My reading took me everywhere. When I decided to illustrate our occasionally deceptive dependence on the senses, I used the example of colour-blindness, and looked into the common misconceptions of dichromacy. Then, after an hour of research into short-wavelength-sensitive cones and the nature of chromatic space, I exploited this new-found knowledge by weaving it into a short fictional illustration. I chastised myself regularly for these excursions of curiosity. The detours were many, and often a little weird. It is only now, looking back at the project, that I am able to see that they were a necessary part of the writing process. I wanted Philosophy for Teenagers to feel like a conversation, with all the quirky and surprising turns that conversations can take. For me, I do not think that would have been possible without allowing time for unstructured diversions in my reading research. Now, of course, the difficulty is how to categorise those books, articles and websites which were read precisely *because* they did not fit into a category.

Later, I intend to group my reading research into categories that reflect specific research questions relevant to my thesis. The questions will signpost clearly why I chose to read particular materials, what I could learn to improve my textbook, and what my investigations uncovered. However, before I do that, I cannot go too much further without discussing the influence of classic and contemporary science fiction writing in the development of Philosophy for Teenagers. To overlook it would be to ignore a lifetime of interest in science fiction. At home, my bookshelves are heavy with imaginative forays into the future, often with terrible artwork on the book covers. The influence of science fiction can be seen in almost every chapter of the textbook. As a literary genre, science fiction is often mocked, derided for its convoluted plotlines and

underdeveloped characters. Science fiction requires readers to put their trust in a reality that often bears little resemblance to real life, without crossing the threshold into pure fantasy. A science fiction reader cannot say, 'Oh, *this* story? This has nothing to do with real life.' In science fiction, some element of human life, however small, always remains recognisable. It could be Earth as home; an element of human history as the 'seed' of the story; or even the fundamental needs of human biology that remain to anchor the reader to elements of reality. The space-person and her robot might well be headed to an asteroid colony on the outer rings of Saturn, but she still drinks coffee when she emerges from hyper-sleep. These are the connections that differentiate science fiction from fantasy, and they allow the reader to keep one foot grounded in the here and now, as the story sets a course for somewhere outside of normality.

Science fiction forms a natural partnership with philosophy. Perhaps this is due to its propensity to speculate on alternative realities, a characteristic that has so much in common with the spirit of philosophical inquiry, in particular with the question, 'What if?'. Science fiction asks readers to take what they know, engage their imaginations, and extrapolate that knowledge outwards and into an unknown future. Yes, sometimes the vision looks a little ridiculous. However, the quality I most admire in 'worthy' science fiction is the optimistic belief that humanity *has* a future. At the beginning of my research I was surprised to see that many writers of philosophy books shared my interest in this genre, with authors drawing openly on science fiction novels, films and television shows to illustrate philosophical concepts. Already a science fiction fan, it was a joy to re-visit some of the genre's classic writers and stories, and to familiarise myself with the work of contemporary authors. Beginning with Isaac Asimov, the godfather of science fiction, I examined the *Foundation* trilogy[1], a complex 'history' of the future that tracks the boom and bust of humanity over millennia. His early novels explore enduring human concerns such as over-population, dwindling resources, the pull of tribalism, greed and personal ambition. The characters—mainly human, some man-made—discuss questions about the fundamental nature of reality, the limitations of knowledge, and the nagging problem of the mind-body dilemma. Asimov's short story collections, *Robot dreams*[2] and *The rest of the robots*[3], and an early novel, *The caves of steel*[4], speculate on what it means to be a human being and explore the ethical considerations inherent in bio-engineering. So persuasive are Asimov's Three Laws of Robotics, a practical yet controversial machine-code of ethics for non-humans, they have been adopted by many science fiction writers and film-makers as a fundamental

'rule' when creating non-human characters. I think Asimov's enduring popularity is due largely to his meticulous thinking, rather than to the elaborate design of his space ships. His work continues to be a relevant and engaging example of philosophy combined with science fiction.

Continuing with classic science fiction authors, I also examined the work of Arthur C Clarke and Philip K Dick, each highly awarded writers of science fiction novels and short stories. Clarke's *Rendezvous with Rama*[5] leaves everything to the imagination, with its enigmatic story of discovery. As is typical of Clarke's work, his characters and his readers are left to wonder. In *Rama*, the characters fumble within the unknown— small, uncertain and blind—grasping at the significance of their situation. Perhaps even more inclined toward philosophical musings than Asimov, Clarke's work often highlights the unreadable face of the universe and, using spirituality and science, the human drive to understand it. Similarly, in *Childhood's end*[6], Clarke presents the reader with the familiar story of alien encounter—they are here, incalculably superior to us, benevolent, and provide us with a utopian existence—while simultaneously revealing the possibility that humanity has reached its evolutionary limits. Faced with the knowledge it can never be more than it is right now, mankind stagnates. For Clarke, this is an uncharacteristic departure from optimism, but typical of his way of encouraging his readers to imagine 'what if?'. His novels *2001: a space odyssey*[7], *Imperial earth*[8] and *The fountains of paradise*[9], published between 1968 and 1978, reflect the wonder and enthusiasm for space exploration prevalent during the years of the American–Soviet space race.

I approached the work of Philip K Dick by starting with the many popular film adaptations of his stories. A prolific science fiction writer, Dick published 44 novels and more than 100 short stories between 1952 and his death in 1982, with several early manuscripts and short story collections published posthumously. After watching many 'big budget' science fiction films based on Dick's work, I set about reading the original stories to gain a sense of his style, interests and philosophical themes. These include *Do androids dream of electric sheep?*, the novel upon which Ridley Scott's *Bladerunner* (1982) was based, and a series of eight short stories that provided the ideas for the films *Total recall* (1990), *Screamers* (1996), *Minority report* (2002), *Imposter* (2002), *Paycheck* (2003), *A scanner darkly* (2006), *Next* (2007), and *The adjustment bureau* (2011)[10]. Dick's stories contain combinations of philosophical, ethical and spiritual

scenarios that invite readers to question their assumptions about the world. Often he does this without the clichéd 'baggage' of inter-galactic space travel preferring, instead, to focus on the familiar. Generally, his stories are set on Earth and populated by ordinary human beings, the science fiction element often arriving through technology, outside intelligence, or a quirk of physics. Throughout the narratives, both characters and readers are forced to assess what they think they know, a process I found valuable in the development of the stimulus elements of Philosophy for Teenagers.

Today, some popular contemporary writers have differentiated themselves from both the fantasy genre and the popular Star Wars and Star Trek conceptions of science fiction. A new science fiction niche is emerging, popularly referred to as 'sci-phi', or science philosophy. Like Dick, these writers tend to explore their themes closer to home. I chose to examine the works of Canadian author Robert Sawyer, New Zealander Bernard Beckett, and American Paolo Bacigalupi. Given the scope of this thesis, and the sheer number of other works to be addressed, it seemed prudent to limit myself to just a few writers. I selected these writers because their work represents a range of contemporary science fiction styles and appeal to both adult and young adult readers. Sawyer tends to draw on science and mathematics to advance his themes, keeping his primary setting firmly located in Toronto, where he lives and writes, while Beckett prefers to create entirely fictional societies in which to present his stories. They approach their narratives differently, but maintain a distinctly philosophical element that places them squarely in the 'sci-phi' sub-genre. Of Sawyer's seventeen published science fiction novels, I elected to read *Frameshift*, *Factoring humanity*, *Calculating God, Flashforward, Wake* and *Watch*[11]. Collectively, these six novels discuss concepts such as free will and the dilemma of determinism, morality and genetic-engineering, metaphysics, consciousness and creationism, all stories that employ familiar concepts of science to create the fictional platforms for philosophical concepts. I also read Sawyer's *Neanderthal Parallax*, a trilogy that includes the novels *Hominids*, *Humans*, and *Hybrids*[12]. These novels explore an alternative outcome to the evolutionary journey of mankind, where *Homo sapiens* is superseded by our hairier cousins, *Homo neanderthalensis*. Through Sawyer's balanced and harmonious model of Neanderthal society, he encourages the reader to explore human concepts of society, identity and culture. Typical of the sci-phi genre, this trilogy poses philosophical questions about humanity's choices by employing a combination of futurism and the familiar. The setting is Earth, albeit a version reminiscent of a pre-industrialised age. The characters

are sufficiently different from humans for us to accept Sawyer's idyllic construct, but similar enough for us to imagine ourselves in their place. I found this approach more subtle and credible than the conventional, alien 'show-and-tell', where human failing is routinely contrasted with that of an infinitely superior visitor. I think it is harder to foster hope for a better future for humanity when the ideal is represented by a smug outsider whose planet is clean, crime-free and perfectly carbon-neutral!

Finally, I examined the work of Beckett and Bacigalupi, relative newcomers to the science fiction genre. Beckett's work includes ten novels and a collection of plays, all but three of which are directed to the children's and young adult fiction market. However, in 2006 he published *Genesis*[13], a novel that marked his first step into adult fiction. This was followed quickly by a work of non-fiction, *Falling for science: asking the big questions*[14]. Together with *August*[15], published in 2011, these three books explore the nature of consciousness, artificial intelligence, free-will and what Beckett believes to be the modern and misguided notion that science can provide the answer to everything. In both *Genesis* and *August*, Beckett employs a post-apocalyptic vision of Earth upon which to create new social orders and explore philosophical questions. Repressive and Orwellian, these inflexible societies drive their protagonists to search for meaning, where they collide with the big questions of philosophy. Like Beckett, US-born Bacigalupi also prefers a ruined Earth upon which to build his stories. *Pump six and other stories*[16] is a collection of ten short stories, many of which speculate on humanity's future from an environmental perspective. In these, Bacigalupi examines the danger of corporatism as it applies to our limited global resources, as well as the ethical question 'Who is responsible when science goes wrong?'. In his debut novel, *The windup girl*[17], he continues to explore issues of environmental and ethical responsibility in a dystopia of accidental bio-plagues, famine, religious fundamentalism and home-grown humans. A dark depiction of the future, Bacigalupi addresses issues that sit at the edge of current technology, and may one day be the province of future generations to address. Terrifying or not, I think it is topics like those used in Beckett and Bacigalupi's fiction that resonate with teenagers. The future—bright or bitter—belongs to them.

My science fiction reading was a useful adjunct to my research into contemporary philosophy books. I found that, as the fiction I selected regularly addressed philosophical themes, it often helped to clarify some of the more abstract concepts, delivering ideas the way I try to deliver mine, via storytelling. However, despite my

particular enjoyment of this part of my reading research, the scope of the thesis demanded I investigate a number of other areas. To demonstrate clarity of purpose, I have arranged each of these areas as a response to one of four research questions.

What do teenagers like to read?

In order to establish what themes and topics might be relevant and interesting to teenagers, I embarked on a study of adolescent literature. Based on the results of an in-house reading survey, conducted annually by the Head of Library at St Stephen's School in Duncraig, I obtained information about the general reading habits and preferences of Year Eleven and Twelve students.[18] Students were asked to provide the titles of two books they enjoyed and would recommend to a friend, and then to complete a questionnaire identifying their tastes and preferences. While the survey was informal, and contained too small a sample to be truly representative of the reading habits of all sixteen-and seventeen-year-olds, it did provide a useful starting point for compiling a reading list. I considered, and later discarded, the idea of conducting a larger, independent survey. As my reading research continued I discovered that several reliable young adult booklists were readily available. These lists provided an excellent selection of classic and contemporary titles for reading and research. In addition to the St Stephen's School survey, my reading list was sourced from the Children's Book Council of Australia[19]; the State Library of Victoria's 'Inside a Dog' website for young adults[20]; recommended teenage titles from the independent UK charity, Booktrust[21]; and the US-based, Young Adult Library Services Association website[22]. While every group has some agenda or vested interest in recommending particular books, I felt these institutions provided relatively impartial booklists not affiliated with specific publishers or commercial interests.

Unsurprisingly, many of the books recommended by students in the St Stephens School survey were texts prescribed by the Year Eleven and Twelve English and English Literature curricula, reflecting what students were required to read rather than books they had freely chosen. In this informal study, three of the most often recommended titles included *The kite runner*[23], *Tomorrow when the war began*[24], and Ishmael Beah's autobiographical account of his experiences as a child soldier, *A long way gone: memoirs of a boy soldier*[25]. Each of these novels employs adolescent protagonists who are forced to navigate their way through the imperfect world of adulthood. Based on student recommendations, I compiled a reading list comprising novels that appeared in

the survey most frequently. To this, I added a further selection of classic and contemporary young adult fiction. Many novels were chosen from the Curriculum Council's 'suggested texts' for the current Stage Two and Three English course[26], as well as ten novels from a tertiary-level course of study, *The literature of adolescence*[27]. During my candidature I read twenty-seven novels for young adults, to identify common themes and characteristics and to ascertain what teenagers are reading currently. This helped me to design and write appropriate stimulus material for the text book. According to Lipman: 'Your aim is to work with what students themselves find interesting, rather than to set the agenda yourself'.[28]

In addition to the twenty-three science fiction novels mentioned earlier, and an assortment of short stories, the following texts fall into one of two broad categories. The first category is classic adolescent literature. The books in this group are perennial favourites on school reading lists for upper secondary school students and include the work of enduring and well-respected authors such as George Orwell, Margaret Mahy, Robert Cormier, Katherine Paterson and JD Salinger.

Among the ten classic titles I examined was Janni Howker's novel *Isaac Campion*, which tells the story of a boy trapped by obligation and duty. This is a classic coming-of-age story, where the young protagonist seeks to break free from the adult influences that dominate his life. In order to gain independence, he must first overcome the childish perception that adults are perfect and that society is an infallible and mysterious construct to which they are bound. In a moment of family crisis, Isaac witnesses the flaws and vulnerability of central authority figures in his life, an event that stirs in him the courage and confidence to plan his future. Similar themes are explored in *Lyddie*, a novel by Katherine Paterson. In this story, the teenaged protagonist, Lyddie Worthen, is hired out to pay her mother's debts. Caught in an unjust system, and unwilling to accept it, Lyddie is unable to grow. She cannot admit that her society is flawed, or that she has unwittingly become a slave. This difficult, but essential, rite of passage is a recurring theme in many classic adolescent novels I have read. In *The catcher in the rye*, Holden Caulfield dismisses everyone, particularly adults, as 'phony'. Jerry Renault, the central character in Robert Cormier's *The chocolate war*, becomes a pawn in a war between school bullies and a sadistic teacher, ultimately realising that he alone must deal with the unpredictable and unfair society in which he finds himself.

As Philosophy for Teenagers is aimed at an adolescent readership I felt it was important to familiarise myself with those themes that traditionally underpin the genre. The novels in this category explored classic adolescent themes such as the search for personal identity, nascent sexuality, the nature of friendship, and the struggle for independence. It seemed reasonable to assume that, if these themes were fundamental to many western teenagers, then I should consider how they might apply to my work. I also aimed to employ some of these conventions in my stimulus material. The struggles and concerns of the protagonists in these novels provided useful voices to consider when writing about Luther's journey in Emails to Miss Ong. In Emails, Luther encounters instances where society, and the adults who inhabit it, are inconsistent or flawed. For example, in the email entitled Running from Moldova, Luther is puzzled by the idea that society's political choices do not always flow from rational decision-making, and that adults may also be influenced by their emotions and prejudices. Similarly, in the email Us and Them, Luther notes the persistence of tribalism in a world where global outlooks are increasingly valued.

Other titles in the classics group include *Dance on my grave* by Aiden Chambers, *The changeover* by Margaret Mahy, *Night* by Elie Wiesel, and *The island*[29] by Gary Paulsen. These novels explore the adolescent stage of identity formation from different perspectives. In Chambers' novel, troubled teen protagonist, Hal, struggles with grief, parental love and emerging homosexuality, maturing eventually into a position of strength and acceptance. While Hal's journey shares elements with Laura's, the central character in *The changeover*, Mahy explores the familiar themes of adolescence through supernatural ideas. While the setting is typically suburban and middle-class, Mahy uses the extraordinary allure of the metaphysical to examine Laura's emerging adulthood and sexuality. The protagonist's growing powers are a metaphor for her transition from a powerless child into a woman of strength and authority.

The second category of texts includes a selection of contemporary and popular novels. A jarringly eclectic collection (a vampire romance sits alongside the memoirs of a Somalian activist), this group helped me to identify the diverse boundaries of teenage reading and was a valuable guide as to the maturity of my readership. The novels in this category also provided topical ideas and perspectives from which I later developed stimulus material for the textbook. For example, *Infidel*, a memoir by Ayaan Hirsi-Ali, and *A thousand splendid suns*, a novel by Khaled Hosseini, both address the modern

and traditional tensions associated with the role of women and Islam. These dramatically differing perspectives provided me with the inspiration to discuss serious cultural practices such as arranged marriage and tribal law, while Abdel-Fattah's *Does my head look big in this?*[30] encouraged me to use humour.

I examined this category to discover the range of topics, styles and language used in novels recommended for adolescents today. After reading several novels, it was clear that, while some upper secondary school students may be more comfortable with fantasy novels and JK Rowling's *Harry Potter & the philosophers stone*[31], a significant number had moved on to more realistic and sophisticated works. *Looking for Alibrandi*, by Melina Marchetta, *Ten things I hate about me,* by Randa Abdel-Fattah, and Tim Winton's *Lockie Lennard: human torpedo*[32] represent a 'middle-ground' in teen novels. They explore adolescent issues from the relative safety of home and school, a realistic reflection of western teenage lifestyles. In all, the protagonists are adolescent and the stories revolve around friendships, family, romance, and issues of identity. These novels remain firmly within the young adult genre, yet begin to explore the influence of alcohol, sex, drugs, and depression.

I also noted an interest in action stories. Matthew Reilly's novels, often promoted as both adult and adolescent fiction, are typically fast-paced and include elements of the supernatural. The protagonists in Reilly's stories, usually males, must use their wits, strength and endurance to survive in desperate situations. In *Contest*[33], the protagonist is teleported without warning into a fight to the death. Lacking any natural defences, and without weapons, he must rely on his instinct and intellect to win his freedom. Similarly, Reilly's *The five greatest warriors*[34] pits a young man against supernatural forces, the author drawing on mythology and folklore to create a life-threatening quest for his characters. Typically, Reilly's protagonists are strong and independent, and they navigate a dangerous world with confidence. While the situations are unrealistic and extreme, Reilly endows his often ordinary main characters with admirable qualities. In them, adolescent readers may find models for the kinds of adults they would like to be.

My research into contemporary adolescent novels is important to my thesis because it has helped me to gauge the maturity levels of my intended readership. I needed to gain a sense of what sixteen-and seventeen-year-olds were reading and assess whether there were limits to the topics I could address. Philosophy for Teenagers is primarily intended

as an upper secondary school text. Excepting the boundaries and conventions inherent in a school environment, I discovered that, at this age, there are very few topics considered taboo. However, while I found it is acceptable to discuss topics such as sex, drugs, abortion or teen suicide, discussions during my focus group studies with teenagers indicated a resistance to being defined by these issues. Teenagers' interests extend well beyond the 'adolescent problems' which adults often ascribe to them. In Philosophy for Teenagers I have tried to use my reading research into adolescent literature to complement the interests and issues that surround teenagers, but have resisted the urge to stereotype them in my stimulus material.

What constitutes adolescent literature and how does it differ from adult literature?
In addition to investigating young adult fiction, I also conducted research into the history of adolescent literature and the literary theories that have accompanied the emergence of the genre. To enhance my understanding of some of the novels within the classics category, I also read an extensive range of articles that offered insight and opinion on the nature of adolescent literature. A full list of these articles can be found in my bibliography. In order to construct a textbook for teenagers I felt it was important to understand fully how and why this particular genre emerged, and to discover the psychosocial influences that have shaped it. Alderman, in 'Rites of Passage: Adolescent Literature', describes adolescence as a period marked by tension and change:

> The transition from childhood to adulthood is a stage of development marked by the adolescent's ability to consider a range of possibilities, construct ideals and examine the values of self, family and society. The period of adolescence also includes times of conformity and rebellion as both old and new are tested and evaluated.[35]

Themes in adolescent literature often mirror the rites of passage experienced by young adults. These include the search for personal identity, the tension between childhood and the adult world, the pressures exerted by peers and parents, emerging sexual identity, the acceptance of imperfection in family, friends and society, and the struggle for freedom and independence. In his work 'Identity, Youth and Crises', developmental psychologist Erik Erikson claims: 'The adolescent expends a great deal of time and energy thinking, planning and dreaming about his or her place in the adult world.'[36]

Middle adolescence conventionally occurs between ages fourteen and sixteen, while young adulthood is determined to fall between the ages of seventeen and twenty-one.[37] Hannam and Echeverria argue that each of these stages is distinct and requires 'special attention'. There are several ideological and interpersonal themes that dominate the identity development of adolescents during these periods, including career aspirations, political interests, religious beliefs, developing a philosophy of life, dating and sexual identity, friendship, and the notion of finding one's place in the group.[38] In my textbook, I have created a wide variety of narrative illustrations, melding many of these adolescent themes with philosophical concepts. For example, in Life: the multiplayer game, a discussion about the ethics of lying is presented in the form of an anonymous on-line relationship. Later, in a scenario that examines Berlin's twin concepts of liberty, a teenager considers her educational and career options from the perspective of poverty. These particular illustrations draw on issues of personal identity, dating and relationships, and the adolescent concern with careers and the future. This approach underpins my thesis and the textbook—the amalgamation of storytelling, relevant adolescent themes, and philosophy.

What format and layout should be employed in the writing of Philosophy for Teenagers?

Once the content of the creative project was determined, I gave consideration to the format and layout of Philosophy for Teenagers. Considerable attention was given to the conventions and traditions of the textbook. I studied a variety of social science textbooks and educational material in order to identify textbook conventions. I also searched for elements that, in my opinion, failed to contribute to the ideal resource for teenagers. The majority of textbooks I examined conform to a conventional and familiar format, where complementary topics and concepts are grouped as chapters and sub-chapters. Typically, the layout is a linear exposition, commencing with overarching definitions of the subject, then narrowing the focus to reveal and explain particular facts or concepts. *Philosophy and ethics: A resource for units 2A-2B*[39], the second in Millett and Tapper's PAE suite, is a typical example of this format, as are Heywood's *Politics*[40], and Della Porta and Diani's *Social movements*: a*n introduction*[41]. Popkin and Stroll's *Philosophy made simple*[42], an introductory philosophy staple that has been in circulation for over thirty years, follows precisely this convention, with objective, encyclopaedic entries on philosophical facts and concepts from absolutism to Zeno the Stoic. While these textbooks provide well-organised repositories of philosophical ideas

they, and other social science textbooks that adopt this format, do not provide the balanced learning tool conceptualised by many philosophy educators. Ann Margaret Sharp, co-developer of the P4C program writes: 'To judge well is not to arrive at a universal concept but rather to achieve a multi-perspective understanding through communal dialogue, reconstruction, visiting and storytelling.'[43] The traditional expository format of many textbooks provides little to facilitate Sharp's ideal journey toward better judgement. While there are many forms of narrative, and a philosophy textbook provides only one aspect of an integrated learning experience, textbooks do represent one of the few enduring resources that accompany a student throughout the school year. In the philosophy classroom, lectures, visual media, and communities of inquiry are valuable sources of information and inspiration but, at exam time, the textbook is still expected to perform as the definitive student resource.

What philosophy texts are recommended for teenagers and are they appropriate for PAE?

The themes and concepts discussed in Philosophy for Teenagers were selected primarily to satisfy the requirements of the WACE Philosophy and Ethics curriculum. These requirements demanded that I familiarise myself with both the syllabus and any educational material recommended by the Curriculum Council of WA. The process included a wide reading of both primary and secondary philosophy texts, together with an examination of humanities-based textbooks. This research supports my claim that there is only one suite of three textbooks, written by the developers of the WACE Philosophy and Ethics course, that provides teachers and upper secondary students with a comprehensive teaching resource for PAE. *Philosophy and ethics: A resource for units 1A-1B*[44] and its stage two and three counterparts were written by Stephan Millett and Alan Tapper. As one of the pioneers of the WACE Philosophy and Ethics course, Tapper explains that the creation of these resources was a requirement of the Curriculum Council, one more component in bringing the development of the course to completion. As required, the books meticulously address every concept covered in the course, with an emphasis on expository material. Examples and stimulus material are scarce and brief, suggesting a pragmatic approach to a task that formed just one aspect of a much larger project. In addition to the constraints of time and priority, Millett and Tapper also acknowledge that the sheer size of the course meant that a great deal of content needed to be included in their books. In my opinion, it is this requirement that left so little room for stimulus material. Tapper and Millett's *Philosophy and ethics*

series is admirably comprehensive. As conventional textbooks, they provide the requisite course information. Teachers are encouraged to choose from among the Curriculum Council's extensive but undifferentiated list of suggested philosophy texts in order to glean ideas, examples and creative material for the classroom. Much of this material, while engagingly titled and marketed, is unsuitable for both the course and for teenagers. Some texts stray too far from the concepts required by the course, while others use language and examples that are too sophisticated for the demographic. Many texts assume prior philosophy knowledge, a disadvantage for students new to the subject. Almost all are written for adults or for primary-aged students.

This is not to say that contemporary philosophy titles do not exist or that the genre is stagnant. The Popular Culture and Philosophy series by Open Court Publishing includes titles such as *Quentin Tarantino and philosophy:* h*ow to philosophize with a pair of pliers and a blowtorch*; *The undead and philosophy: chicken soup for the soulless*; *Manga and philosophy, and Facebook and philosophy*[45]. In 2000, Open Court published the first book in this popular series, *Seinfeld and philosophy: a book about everything and nothing*[46]. By February 2011, over fifty-five titles had been published in this series. The number of books published has expanded annually, with more than ten new titles released in 2010 alone. As an exercise in marketing, Open Court has clearly located its niche. But are the books suitable for philosophy education at high school level? Each book contains a variety of essays on a common philosophical theme. For example, *Bullshit and Philosophy: how to get perfect results every time*[47] addresses the question of lies, deception, and political 'spin' in modern society. While the essays in these books are generally grouped around a popular argument, television show or cultural phenomenon, a factor that appears to indicate some compatibility with the interests of teenagers, they ultimately assume a sophisticated life experience and some prior understanding of the philosophical concepts addressed. This series is evidence of the growth of texts that cleverly combine popular culture and philosophy but, in my view, is unsuitable for the adolescent philosophy novice.

Conversely, publications such as *Do you think what you think you think?*, *The pig that wants to be eaten: And 99 other thought experiments*, *The duck that won the lottery: And 99 other bad arguments, and The philosophy gym: 25 short adventures in thinking*[48] present informal thought experiments, fallacy-spotting scenarios, and

philosophy quizzes, that are accessible to the teenaged philosophy student. *Do you think what you think you think?* offers the reader opportunities to test for inconsistency and prejudice by using a series of questionnaires and quizzes. This element of competition, together with the opportunity to link the exercise to self, provides an amusing learning format. Baggini's previously mentioned *Pig* and *Duck* texts provide similar entertaining qualities. Law's *Philosophy gym* presents philosophical scenarios in the form of short dialogues between fictional characters. The scenarios offered are easy to read and often humorous. While I feel that all of these texts possess components that a teacher or student of philosophy may find useful, they only partially address the PAE curriculum and their formats fail to demarcate clearly the expositional from the stimulus material. Also, as these books are aimed at an adult market, I found that some of the questions and discussions employed were possibly inappropriate for school-aged students. For example, in *Do you think what you think you think?,* Baggini constructs a scenario that describes a sexual relationship between a brother and sister in order to illustrate the idea of taboos. In *The philosophy gym: 25 short adventures in thinking,* Law devotes a full chapter to the question, 'What's Wrong with Gay Sex?' I do not wish to underestimate the sophistication of senior secondary students, some of whom would be comfortable with these topics, instead I argue that, while there is a need for contemporary and stimulating material in high school classrooms, students of this age possess varying life experiences and differing levels of maturity.

During the writing of my earliest drafts of Philosophy for Teenagers, I considered the role of primary philosophy texts. Many of the philosophers to whom I refer in the textbook lived centuries ago, and published their work in languages other than English. Some, such as Socrates, left no original writings, his ideas surviving through the work of his most famous student, Plato. In the early months of my research I read modern translations of the philosophical works that applied to Philosophy for Teenagers. For example, in *Plato: collected dialogues*, edited by Hamilton and Cairns, I examined Plato's three famous dialogues, *Meno*, *Gorgias* and *Apology*[49]. These provided me with historical background for both Socrates and Plato, and an illustration of Socrates' use of rhetoric and persuasive speech. This proved useful in the development of More Than a Moving Mouth, a chapter dedicated to the mechanics of argument and the philosophical community of inquiry. In this chapter I discuss Socrates' method of rigorous cross-examination and the reasons why he believed it was so important to question the nature

of everything. *Apology* provided a useful historical context in which to place Socrates' teaching, and an insight into his connection to Plato.

In Life: The multiplayer game, a chapter on ethics, I drew on ideas from Plato's *Republic*[50]. This text provided background for the explanation of Plato's ideal society, a valuable model with which to illustrate the problems of extremism and the inherent drawbacks of social structures that fail to consider human desires. In *Nicomachean ethics*[51], Aristotle provided the antidote to Plato's inflexible model, inspiring a discussion on his 'doctrine of the golden mean' and his optimistic idea of 'right intention.' These appear in the above-mentioned chapter on ethics and in More Equal than You as part of a larger discussion on the individual and society. In the development of Beauty, what's in it for me?, a chapter on aesthetics, I read Aristotle's *Poetics*[52]. While the text revealed some of Aristotle's views on the nature of beauty, its focus on poetry and drama rendered it less valuable than I had hoped.

For the writing of my chapters on political philosophy, The Farm Tools of State, and the individual and society, More Equal than You, I studied the work of several philosophers whose original works proved more helpful than that of the ancient philosophers. I read extracts from Thomas Hobbe's *Leviathan* [53]which provided material to illustrate concepts of humans in a 'state of nature' and the idea of the state, together with John Locke's *An essay concerning human understanding*[54], for an insight into social contract theory. Similarly, Isaiah Berlin's lecture on positive and negative liberty[55] was valuable in my discussion about freedom, and John Rawl's *A theory of justice*[56] offered insight into political philosophy's first cohesive theory on how societies could be organised equitably. I also examined Robert Nozik's *Anarchy, state and utopia*[57] for counter-arguments to Rawl's theories. For my chapter on aesthetics, I read David Hume's *Of the standard of taste*[58] for understanding and ideas concerning the differences between personal taste and the philosophical judgement of taste, as well as the concepts of aesthetic experience and distance. An examination of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of aesthetic judgement*[59], provided background for a discussion on the objective nature of beauty, as well as the concept of the sublime.

My examination of these and other primary texts was of limited value to my textbook. While it was important to gain an understanding of the historical context within which many philosophers lived and worked, I found that the English-language translations

lacked eloquence and clarity. Given that the subject matter of philosophy is already abstract in nature and that the aim of my thesis was to produce an introductory-level text for teenagers, I felt that my aims were better served by the use of contemporary philosophy texts.

Contemporary philosophy texts are readily available in one of three varieties. There are those that aim to categorise and describe classic philosophical concepts in a largely expository, encyclopaedic style, and some that select a few philosophy concepts and append them to popular culture. Others aim to provide the reader with philosophy 'bites', amusing and economical entrées into the subject. As philosophy education in Australia has only recently become available to teenagers, almost all of the literature available is written for an adult market, failing to address fully the particular needs of upper secondary philosophy students and their teachers. Philosophy for Teenagers is researched and written as a dedicated endeavour, the aim of which is to provide a balanced educational text that addresses the curriculum of the WACE Philosophy and Ethics course, while simultaneously providing original and age-appropriate stimulus material. Given the constraints of this thesis, the work provides a blend of concepts drawn from two, of three, stages of the PAE curriculum. However, I envisage that my work will eventually be expanded to accommodate the still-evolving nature of the course. PAE is currently being modified in light of new teaching feedback. According to members of the Curriculum Council's Assessment, Review and Moderation panel, it is highly likely that the course will be trimmed of content.[60] It is my intention to keep abreast of these changes and continue with the development of Philosophy for Teenagers beyond my period of candidature.

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Chapter 4: Applied Research

The fundamental aim of this thesis is to create an alternative style of textbook that will resonate with, and inspire, a teenage demographic. During the early development of the thesis, my research was mainly theoretical. However, once a feasible draft was composed, it became important to gauge the effectiveness of the work in a classroom setting, with the target readership. While I felt confident that the theoretical research avenues most pertinent to my thesis had been largely exhausted, I speculated that the most innovative components of the work would benefit from the direct feedback of students via some form of action research.

The starting point for my investigation was to establish whether the premise for this particular form of research was justifiable for this project. I studied several texts on educational and applied research and determined that the basic qualifications for embarking upon action research in the field of education were largely universal. As the investigation would involve the testing of my own work, and it was within my sphere of influence to adjust future action based on the results, and the results would contribute to improvement of the textbook, I decided to proceed with the next phase of the action research development.[1]

Initially, several different types of action research were considered, including online questionnaires, targeted student questionnaires, individual student interviews, and the systematic observation of a philosophy class.[2] Given the limited number of students currently studying PAE, I dismissed the idea of an entirely anonymous study. I theorised that students would be more inclined to invest the time and energy to provide considered responses to my questions if they felt convinced that their opinions were valuable, and if they could interact directly with the researcher. I wanted to ensure that the anonymity afforded by an online questionnaire would not result in lethargic or frivolous feedback, thus rendering the study meaningless. Further, the notion of individual student interviews was abandoned for pragmatic reasons. Such interviews would have been extremely time-consuming and intrusive for the teacher and students of the nominated philosophy class. The least invasive option is one where the researcher acts as observer only. While this type of study would have involved the collection of field notes on the dynamics of an existing PAE class, I believe it would have precluded the opportunity to test the viability and effectiveness of my own material.

Ultimately, I decided to conduct two focus group studies. As a form of qualitative research, the focus group study is appropriate because it allows for intimate, small-group discussion with the intended readership.[3] Given the nature of the material to be examined, I wanted the opportunity to generate dialogue with and between the students. In the course of a focus group study, the opinions, observations and ideas of participants influence each other, evolving with the input of others. In contrast to individual interviews, or a questionnaire completed in isolation, the focus group presents a more interactive environment. I anticipated that this type of focussed discussion would yield useful information regarding each participant's emotional response to my work, as well as the opinions and perceptions typical of the demographic.

In addition to the focus group study I also chose to incorporate a short questionnaire, to be completed prior to the discussions. While it was anticipated that the discussions would probably yield the most useful feedback, I was reluctant to conclude the study with voice recordings only. The questionnaire replicates the questions used in the focus group discussions. My reason for this duplication was primarily prudence. Any study conducted in a state school is not easily arranged and I was concerned that audio-equipment failure or inaudible recordings could leave me without data.

As a focus group study typically involves people who possess common characteristics of interest to the researcher, I believe that this method was the best way to produce qualitative data for my research. The selected participants were aged between sixteen and eighteen. The focus group studies took place at a state secondary school in Perth, and they were conducted over a two-day period. The participants were drawn from two Philosophy and Ethics classes at upper secondary level. As required by the Western Australian Department of Education and Training, students were provided with information about the studies, and informed consent was sought several weeks in advance. Participation was entirely voluntary, and students were advised that they could withdraw from the study at any time. As this group represents the ideal demographic for my textbook, I felt that it was here that I was most likely to receive useful feedback.

Under the supervision of a qualified and experienced philosophy educator, my role as facilitator was to provide information about the study, organise the students into groups, distribute and oversee the completion of a questionnaire and, later, conduct and record

small group discussions. As the ideal number of participants for a focus group is usually between five and ten, it was necessary to divide each class into two groups.[4] Each of the studies was completed within one hour.

The material selected for examination in the focus group study was taken from several chapters of Philosophy for Teenagers. This material was chosen because it covers a wide range of writing styles—from humorous, easy-to-read pieces to more sophisticated expository passages. Selections for study included:

1. Emails to Miss Ong: Message from an Old Student and Fate and Coffee
2. the introductory narrative of Chapter Three, A Bad Idea: the Kombi Van
3. expositional material on critical thinking, Inductive and Deductive Arguments
4. an informal fallacy, Arguing from Vagueness
5. a community of inquiry dialogue, and
6. an extract from a chapter on political philosophy, Vanilla Gray.

The questioning route for the focus group studies was developed in accordance with criteria recommended in Krueger and Casey, *Focus groups: a practical guide for applied research*.[5] Other literature on the subject of qualitative research methods was also consulted, including *Designing qualitative research* by Uwe Flick, Barbour's *Developing focus group research: politics, theory and practice*, and later work, *Doing focus groups*[6]. The design of the questionnaire, its purpose explained earlier as a back-up tool, followed basic principles found in the text *Survey methodology*[7].

As recommended, the questions were open-ended, one-dimensional and included clear directions. The questionnaire began with an informal opening question designed to relax the participants. A preamble before Questions Two to Ten was intended to reassure the participants about what was expected of them and to explain why their feedback was important. I then proceeded to key questions about aspects of the text. Questions nine and ten were designed to elicit a summary opinion of the text, given earlier reflection and discussion. The complete Focus Group Study Questionnaire can be found in the appendix.

Data was collected via the participant questionnaire and audio recordings of each group discussion. An abridged transcript of each recording was made, omitting those portions

of the discussion that were not relevant to the purpose of the research. I analysed the results for the following information:

1. Common themes and points raised by participants
2. Surprising or unexpected points or opinion raised by participants
3. Any, and all emotional reactions to the work, including excitement, inspiration, offence and boredom
4. Frequency of positive or negative feedback across the group
5. Individual quotes that represent the degree of group opinion on a given topic.

The following report summarises the results of the focus group study and, as required by the Department of Education and Training (DET), will be sent to the DET and to the participating school on completion of my candidature. The report will also be made available (on request) to all participants in the study.

Comprehensive Report: Focus Group Studies Conducted on 25 October & 1 September, 2010.

Two focus group studies were held. Participants were obtained from two separate classes of Year Eleven students, referred to as Group One and Group Two. Due to the time constraints of the participating secondary school, the full study could not be completed in single day. The reading material and questionnaire were therefore divided into two parts and delivered in two sessions within an eight-day period. The two sessions are referred to as Part A and Part B.

Focus Group Study	No. of Participants in Part A	No. of Participants in Part B	Date of Part A	Date of Part B
Group One	8	7	October 25, 2010	September 1, 2010
Group Two	13	14	October 25, 2010	September 1, 2010

Prior to the commencement of each session, I addressed the student group. While the students received formal information letters explaining the study prior to my visit, I felt it was in the interests of the study to describe my role as a PhD student, explain the aims of the project, and stress the importance and value of constructive feedback. I also explained how the study would unfold and highlighted that, while the questionnaire was

brief and they were at liberty to provide the shortest possible answers (or none at all), the more advice, ideas and observations they made, the better I could tailor Philosophy for Teenagers to suit their needs and desires. During this introduction I reiterated that it was their right to withdraw their participation at any time, and that any contribution they made to the study would be de-identified prior to reporting.

During each session students were asked to read extracts from the textbook. The extracts represented different features and aspects of the text. The time allocated to reading was approximately fifteen minutes. Following the reading period, students were asked to complete a questionnaire containing five questions. With the exception of Question One, each question related directly to the reading material. Students were offered the opportunity to respond by ticking a pre-prepared multiple choice option, or by providing a short, written answer of their own. A further ten to fifteen minute period was allowed for completion of the questionnaire.

There are several advantages to the multiple-choice format. One benefit is the ease of completion for the participant. A student may choose the answer that represents his or her opinion most closely, without the effort of articulating an entirely original answer. This factor also reduces the number of questions deemed 'too hard' and deliberately skipped by a participant. Multiple-choice responses are also easier to compare during the data analysis phase. Conversely, they limit the breadth of answers available for analysis. In this study, I planned to determine whether the work was successful in achieving the goals I set for myself, but also hoped to elicit original feedback from teenagers. The short-answer option offered students, should they wish, an opportunity to provide a wholly independent answer. As anticipated, this option was rarely chosen but, when it was, led to some interesting and original observations.

Following the completion of the questionnaire, students were divided into groups of four to six, depending on the size of the class. I then led a short discussion with each group where each topic contained in the questionnaire was revisited, together with any further observations or suggestions the participants wished to add. There were six group discussions per session, each lasting approximately ten minutes. The group discussions were audio-recorded. Partial transcripts, and commentary, concerning these discussions are available in the appendix of this essay.

Difficulties in the Focus Group Studies

Contextuality

The focus group studies highlighted that extracts or readings taken from a larger work can be difficult to contextualise. A significant proportion of Philosophy for Teenagers is expositional in nature, a requirement of the Philosophy and Ethics curriculum. Although the students considered the creative extracts engaging, they felt that they sometimes took too long to come to the point. Occasionally, students failed to locate a relationship between the philosophical concept and the illustration itself because the creative extracts were removed from the expositional content of the text.

To overcome this difficulty I briefly explained the context of each reading, including its location and intended function within the textbook. This took place during the discussion component of the sessions. While these explanations were helpful, they were only offered after the completion of the questionnaire, that is, too late to influence the participants' written responses. In hindsight, the quality of the written component of the study may have been improved had I conducted the discussions *before* the completion of the questionnaire but, having witnessed the robust nature of the discussions, the participants may also have been excessively influenced by the ideas of others, possibly compromising the integrity of their personal impressions and feedback. In an ideal study, participants would have the time and opportunity to read the text in its entirety before providing feedback. However, given the demands of an upper secondary curriculum and the heavy work load of Year Eleven students, this was not possible.

Writing from a teenaged perspective

While the students understood that *someone* must write the texts for their secondary courses, and that a teenager was unlikely to have the knowledge or skill set to do it, there was a small but persistent resistance to the idea of an adult writing for teenagers. The main reason for conducting the focus group study with participants aged sixteen to seventeen was to find out how teenagers might like their textbook to look and sound. There are many pitfalls. These include the stereotyping of teenaged interests and language, assumptions about life experience, transparent didacticism, and an unconscious inclination of adults to patronise. There also exists a social tendency to categorise the characteristics of young adults at precisely the same time that teenagers

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are most sensitive and resistant to the act of being categorised. This was evident in my experience of the focus group studies. I found that the most effective way to counter this resistance was to acknowledge openly to participants that I was not there to 'crack the code' of young adult psychology, or to find ways of speaking their language. Rather, I wanted to find new ways to combine the philosophical concepts they must learn with stimulus material that might make them more interesting to learn. During the discussions, it was important to reassure students that I understood their concerns and did not pretend to know what all teenagers like. I was acutely aware that, if I attempted to fake my intentions, appeared insincere or patronising, the students would withdraw.

A Loss of Momentum

The first two sessions, Part A, generated the most interest and enthusiasm among the participants. Participants were generally more curious and alert and, and I speculate that the following factors might apply:

- Despite each participant receiving a detailed Information Sheet regarding the study, Part A provided a level of mystery. Participants were curious about who I was, what the study was about, and what would happen next. As Part B of the study was conducted using the same methodology, the participants appeared a little less interested and were more easily distracted.

- The reading material provided for Part B, while varied, did not inspire the same level as enthusiasm as that for Part A. It appears that the excitement demonstrated for Emails to Miss Ong, the extracts that dominated the discussion in Part A, was not generated by any one extract in Part B.

- While the Information Form specified that participation in the focus group study was voluntary, participants arrived at the second session after a one-week hiatus, which may have diminished their personal level of commitment to the process. With the novelty of the study behind them some participants lost focus on the task. In hindsight, a focus group study of this kind might be more efficiently conducted in one longer session, rather than two shorter sessions. This would enable the facilitator to capitalise on the natural curiosity of fresh experience.

The Drawbacks of Anonymity

One feature of the focus group studies I did not expect was the variation of opinion between the discussion groups and the questionnaires. The questionnaire was distributed

prior to the facilitation of discussion groups for two main reasons. Firstly, I wanted to ensure that I left the focus group studies with evidence of conducting them in an unbiased and methodical manner, and in an atmosphere that ensured minimum contamination of the data by the possible effects of peer pressure. My second reason was more practical. The timing of the questionnaire could be quantified and controlled, whereas the discussion groups could not be. I was concerned that I might run out of time for completion of the questionnaire.

Naïvely, I envisaged that the participants would read the extracts supplied and then provide their considered responses, uninfluenced by the opinions of peers. What I did not anticipate was that the quality of the participants' responses was directly linked to the students' perceived value of their opinions. Basically, they cared more about their answers when they could see I cared about their answers. The anonymity of the questionnaire allowed, and possibly encouraged, some students to provide minimal or facetious answers. Some participants failed to see that the quality of their written answers was valuable, using the space to doodle.

The discussion groups provided a forum where I could 'show' participants that what they had to say was important which, in turn, encouraged many to be more voluble and generous with their feedback. While the majority of the participants appeared confident enough to criticise the work, it was evident in the demeanour and feedback of some that being face-to-face with the author also has its drawbacks. A few students shied away from saying anything that might offend or disappoint me and, on more than one occasion, I detected notes of gallantry where a participant would attempt to rescue me from a particularly vigorous bout of criticism.

This disparity between the answers provided on the questionnaire and those given in the audio-taped discussions became evident after the studies were completed and the data analysis began. As expected, the transcripts of the discussion groups yielded better quality feedback than the questionnaire.

Methodology of Data Analysis
As the raw data for this study emerged in two distinct forms, I needed to devise a systematic process that drew meaningful information from each that could later be

applied to the same set of criteria. As the main tool of qualitative research is comparison, I aimed to compare the data in four groups: Group One, Group Two, Discussion Group One and Discussion Group Two.[8]

The first task was to complete an abbreviated transcription of the audio recordings. As the discussions were free-flowing, and participants often interrupted each other, a complete transcription was impractical. I identified and recorded the general opinion of the group towards a particular topic, using the categories 'agree', 'disagree', 'mixed opinion' and 'no comment'. While the discussion groups always began with a question drawn from the questionnaire, the discussion rarely stayed within the boundaries of that initial question. Later, this made analysis more difficult but, ultimately, the students provided a rich source of original viewpoint that was of benefit to the study. In order to accommodate unanticipated perspectives, I noted new categories for use in the analysis. In addition to general opinion and potential categories of data, I also recorded direct quotations to support the general viewpoint of the group.

When the transcription process was complete I created a series of tables in which to record the results of the discussion groups. The tables represented each of six extracts presented to the students as reading material. Then a series of statements was devised, each reflecting a specific aspect of the material. For example, in a table reflecting the extract from Vanilla Gray, the statement appears: 'I think the examples used were clear and immediately understood' (see appendix, p. 311). Each of the statements used in the tables represents a category of data. As it was not possible to identify clearly individual voices on the audio-recording, the data entered for each of the discussion groups appears on the tables as a single viewpoint. As an adjunct to this viewpoint, I have provided comprehensive written evidence supporting this decision in a series of reports, entitled Observations and Discussions (see appendix, pp. 296-308).

The task of analysing the questionnaires also proved difficult as the questions were designed to encourage written feedback, as well as multiple-choice options. In my opinion, the ideal answer for this type of study is a written contribution of at least three sentences. During the design phase of the study I considered that, as the participants were adolescents and as the study was entirely voluntary, some students might be inclined to skip a question completely if there was not an easy way to answer. To avoid

this outcome, I incorporated multiple-choice answer options into some (but not all) of the questions.

I added several more statements to the tables that reflected the questions asked. Each answer supplied was read and categorised. As the individuals in Group One and Group Two could be separated and quantified, the charts show the distribution of opinion from the questionnaires as numbered. The 'no comment' category was a necessary inclusion in the table as not all statements were covered in every discussion and, frequently, not every aspect of a question was answered in the questionnaire. Where a participant's response specifically correlated to a statement, that response was recorded in the table. Where the participant did not refer to a particular statement, he or she was assigned 'no comment' for that statement.

Comparison of Groups

The four groups largely concurred with each other's viewpoint on most statements. One significant departure between groups occurs in the data on the extract, A Community of Inquiry, where the participants of Group Two (questionnaire) have responded differently from Discussion Groups One and Two. Notably, nearly half of the participants wrote that they found the depiction, characters and dialogue to be realistic and/or credible. Later, all participants in Group Two discussed these issues and appeared to reverse their position. Of all the extracts presented for feedback, this material attracted the most debate. I speculate that this reversal of opinion may be partly the result of peer pressure, as some of the more confident students were quite vocal in their criticism of this extract. The reversal may also reflect an early reluctance to criticise in the presence of the author, replaced with a more comfortable and emboldened attitude during the discussions later.

Influence of Focus Group Studies

This textbook has been developed using an empirical research model. A hypothesis was advanced, specifically that the format, style and language of traditional philosophy textbooks fails to address fully the specific needs of the adolescent learner. My research methodology has aimed to locate evidence to support that claim. Theoretical research, described in the previous chapter of this essay, demonstrates a methodical progression towards the justification of the hypothesis, but cannot hope to supply a fully realised

solution. The proof that 'something new' is required does not produce a textbook. The creation of an educational resource represents the second phase of the research process, one that evolves and grows as more data is gathered.

Action research, in the form of focus group studies, provided me with more data to contribute to the textbook. However, the act of writing remains a creative process, one that clarifies thought and generates new ideas. The end product is not a fixed model I have attempted to justify after the fact. The following eleven specific changes have been inspired by the results of the focus group studies. They demonstrate the fluid nature of the creative process and my determination to respond to the data as it presents itself. The modifications detailed here have been incorporated into the final draft of Philosophy for Teenagers. While the reader of this essay and the finished textbook is not privy to the numerous early drafts, I hope that these modifications will provide some insight into this important element of the writing process.

1. The introductory narratives that commence each new chapter were condensed. While students generally understood and enjoyed these narratives, they felt it was important to get to the expositional material more quickly. This change reflects the needs of students to prioritise their time. Several students expressed a tension between the need to read everything recommended by the PAE course and the time available to divide between all their WACE subjects.

2. The contrast between creative illustrations and expositional material has been sharpened. Students indicated that the tone needed to be more formal immediately following creative material. This highlighted the need to keep the stimulus material distinct from the more traditional elements of the textbook. Students felt that, where there was a blurring of these materials, there was the potential for confusion. Students were keen to avoid the duplication of effort demanded by re-reading.

3. In Emails to Miss Ong, Luther occasionally refers to Miss Ong's replies to his emails. This change is in line with the students' desire to know that Luther is receiving replies, without actually including Miss Ong's emails. Students reported that they did not need to see Miss Ong's replies, but felt it was strange that Luther might continue to send emails without a response.

4. In Emails to Miss Ong, more sentence fragments have been incorporated into Luther's emails. This change is in response to criticism that the emails are too formally drawn, and that Luther writes in a grammatically correct, but unrealistic, fashion. Many students commented on anachronistic or non-Australian words and phrases in the emails, a reflection of both the age and mixed origins of the writer. Particularly dated expressions have been replaced, but students felt that occasionally foreign-sounding expressions contributed to Luther's character.

5. In Emails to Miss Ong, the stage at which Luther states he began his friendship with Miss Ong has been raised from Year Eight to Year Ten. This change is in response to the students' suggestion that a boy aged thirteen is unlikely to engage in deep philosophical debate with a school teacher. Students commented that this detail undermined the credibility of the relationship.

6. In Emails to Miss Ong: Fate and Coffee, Luther signs off his email with a postscript that reads: 'Don't hesitate to put me on your Blocked Senders list if I start to freak you out.' This has been removed after several female students pointed out that, until reading the postscript, they had not considered the relationship between Luther and Miss Ong as in any way inappropriate or sexual. The postscript inadvertently introduced this possibility, an undesired response to Luther's character. Generally, students did not feel that the relationship between Miss Ong and Luther was uncomfortable or inappropriate because of gender differences.

7. I have introduced more direct disagreement between characters in A Community of Inquiry. Characters now refer to hypothetical situations rather than life experiences, make shorter contributions, and are occasionally rude to one another. Students in the study felt that these characteristics were more typical of an in-class COI involving teenagers. Students also felt that the selection of participants in the community of inquiry was too contrived, a transparent attempt to provide voices from all genders and backgrounds. They argued that the characters were too homogenous and agreeable to be truly representative of

an in-class inquiry, and that in a realistic classroom situation there would be more argument, disagreement and interruption.

8. The facilitator has been re-named 'teacher', and the role has been altered. This character now intervenes more frequently, but contributes less at each interval. Students felt that the facilitator was manipulative and didactic, an intrusive and unrealistic force behind the discussion. According to students, the teacher contributes more often, but usually says less.

9. In Vanilla Gray, the character of Vanilla has been recast as a young woman, rather than as a child. As a few students indicated a parallel between Vanilla's situation and child-abuse, I felt compelled to modify this character. While most students relished the opportunity to push the boundaries of appropriateness, those same students could be made uncomfortable by darker imagery.

10. In Arguing from Vagueness, the reference to a 'golden moustache' on a female character has been replaced by 'sparse, blond arm hair.' Students said they were distracted by the idea of a woman with a moustache. Again, a small change, but indicative of adolescent discomfort with potentially embarrassing imagery.

11. The example of 'fullness', used in Arguing from Vagueness, has been redrawn. Students complained that the example was unclear. This change represents a broader requirement that all stimulus material must enhance the learning process and provide alternate pathways to understanding. Creative material that is obtuse or unclear is not helpful.

Conclusion

Three overarching principles were gleaned from the study and applied to the textbook. Specifically, I learned that it is important to students that the fictional components are concise and strictly relevant. It is also necessary to contrast stimulus material sharply with expositional material, as students want to be certain of the facts. Again, this is an indicator that time management is a priority. I found that humour was welcomed as a narrative device. However, attempts to mimic the speech patterns and colloquialisms of a teenager are generally considered patronising (and fail). Students indicated that humour can

be quirky without trying to appeal to one specific demographic, advice I aimed
to incorporate in Philosophy for Teenagers.

NOTES

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Appendix

Focus Group Study Questionnaire Part A

A preamble to the questions

This questionnaire asks you some questions about the material you have just read. It is not a test. I'd just like to hear your honest opinions about it. This book is being written specifically for students who are studying Philosophy and Ethics in upper secondary school. I can't do that properly unless I know what you really think about what has been written so far. Every question provides space to record your own comments. If you have an idea, suggestion, or criticism, to improve the work, don't hesitate to write it down.

Question 1

What made you decide to choose Philosophy and Ethics as a subject?

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Question 2

Each chapter of the book ends with an email from Luther to an old school teacher, Miss Ong. These fictional emails try to place a concept discussed in the chapter into a real-life situation. When you read the two *Emails to Miss Ong*, did any particular aspect of them stand out in a good, or a bad, way? What did you like, or *not* like, about them? Did Luther seem credible to you?

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Question 3

Each chapter begins with a short narrative that is designed to stimulate your imagination and capture your attention. The narrative about the Kombi van leads into a chapter about rational argument and critical thinking. When you read the narrative about the Kombi van stuck in the mud, how did it make you feel?

- ☐ I thought it was engaging. It made me want to read on.
- ☐ It was interesting but I don't see the connection to rational argument and critical thinking.
- ☐ I see the connection to rational argument and critical thinking, but think it was a waste of my reading time.
- ☐ None of the above. This is how I felt about narrative:

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Question 4

Some of the material in a textbook must be more formally presented. Describe how you felt about the passage on inductive and deductive arguments by ticking **one** of the following statements:

- ☐ The language used was formal but clear, and the examples used helped me to understand the concepts.
- ☐ The language used was too formal and I had to rely on the examples to make sense of the concepts.
- ☐ The language used was formal but clear, but the examples confused me.
- ☐ None of the above. This is how I felt about the language and examples used in this passage:

_____
_____
_____
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_____

Question 5

In this book there are a number of **fictional** stories, illustrations and examples. These are intended to complement the core information that <u>must</u> be taught in Philosophy and Ethics. Generally speaking, tell us whether you think these fictional components are helpful, or not.

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Focus Group Study Questionnaire Part B

A preamble to the questions

This questionnaire asks you some questions about the material you have just read. It is not a test. I'd just like to hear your honest opinions about it. This book is being written specifically for students who are studying Philosophy and Ethics in upper secondary school. I can't do that properly unless I know what you really think about what has been written so far. Every question provides space to record your own comments. If you have an idea, suggestion, or criticism, to improve the work, don't hesitate to write it down.

Question 1

When we read about the fallacy Arguing from Vagueness, how did the examples make you feel? Tick **one** of the following statements:

- ☐ The examples were mildly amusing and helped me to understand the concept.
- ☐ The examples were distracting and did not really help my understanding.
- ☐ The examples made me feel uncomfortable, or offended, and did not help my understanding.
- ☐ None of the above. This is how I felt about the examples:

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Question 2

When we read the transcript of the Community of Inquiry on the value of travel, did the language and dialogue flow in a realistic way to you? Were you able to imagine yourself being part of this discussion? Was there anything in particular that stood out as good or bad in the dialogue?

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Question 3

As seen in the story of *Vanilla Gray*, the tone of the book is often light and mildly amusing. How do you feel about the tone? Tick **one** of the following statements:

- ☐ I like the tone and think it makes the topic feel more accessible and friendly.
- ☐ I find the tone a bit irritating and distracting. I'd prefer the material to maintain a serious tone.
- ☐ I find the tone a bit patronising. Attempts to talk to teenagers 'in their own language' annoy me.
- ☐ None of the above. This is how I feel about the tone of the book:

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Question 4

One of the key reasons for writing this book is to find imaginative and creative ways of linking philosophical concepts with the world of young adults. Of the material you have read today, do you think the book achieves this, or does it miss its mark?

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Question 5

Keep in mind that in any textbook there is basic information that must be included to satisfy the curriculum. If you could write the textbook yourself, what would you add in, or leave out, that would make it more relevant and interesting?

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Group One, Part A: observations & discussions

The first session took place on August 25th, 2010, between 9:50 and 10:50am. The first class of Year Eleven students contained ten students, with an equal ratio of male to female students. Uncertain of how the study would be received by a group of sixteen to seventeen-year-olds, I was pleasantly surprised at the attention and attitudes I found there. Students were attentive and interested in the process, and it was gratifying to see that most students were sufficiently interested in their role to offer a great deal of written feedback. As the effort was entirely optional, I perceived that the students found the task an effort of some value. Following the reading period and completion of the questionnaire, the students formed equal groups in preparation for discussion of the material. In this class, boys formed one group and girls formed the second.

I commenced with the group of boys, launching my first question to a participant who appeared to take his role in the focus group particularly seriously. The attitude of the remaining boys ranged from nervous joking to, in the case of one boy, quiet suspicion. I asked the first participant if he came away from the readings with any general impression of the work, but found that my question was not specific enough to elicit any response of value. Changing direction, I then asked about Luther Bow in Emails to Miss Ong, pressing participants to explain their impression of this character. Responses were slow initially but, as the boys relaxed, all boys became keen to contribute. In the case of Luther Bow and the fictional emails, I received spirited feedback.

Generally, the boys responded positively to the idea of a fictional narrative in the form of a regular email but questioned the absence of Miss Ong's response. One boy said that he didn't think anyone would keep writing emails if he never got an answer. Another boy felt that an implied reply from Miss Ong, contained at the beginning of each email, was sufficient to rescue Luther from a potential 'creepy stalker' status. One participant made the innovative suggestion that Miss Ong's reply could be created by the reader, a student exercise that could be woven into the text to form a regular component. There were mixed reactions to this idea, with one boy groaning it would result in 'more work!' All of the boys agreed that while they thought Luther was a little odd, they liked the way he spoke and found him a believable character. One boy described the emails as 'intriguing'. A few students pointed out words or expressions they felt did not 'fit' Luther's age or Australian background, issues they accepted as unavoidable when the

author is a culturally-mixed, middle-aged woman. Notably, the words 'rubber-necking' and 'folks' were highlighted as anachronistic. Several boys felt that Luther's emails needed to contain more contractions and sentence fragments, in order to better reflect Luther's age and the usually abbreviated nature of emails. Regarding the question of Luther and Miss Ong's relationship, the boys were generally agreed that while the teacher-student friendship was a little unusual, it did not undermine the credibility of the emails.

Following the discussion about Emails to Miss Ong, I asked the boys to comment on A Bad Idea: the Kombi Van. This is an extract from the introductory pages of Chapter Two, Something to Prove. One boy asked why the passage 'took so long to get to the point', prompting me to explain the context of the reading. I explained that the reading was a fictional narrative representing the introduction to a new chapter on critical thinking and formal argument, and that each of the ten chapters in the text began in this fashion. Once this was clarified, most of the boys agreed that the piece made an interesting introduction to the topic. They also felt that it was important to follow the conversational, story-telling style of the introduction with serious and factual exposition. One student highlighted that the text must clearly distinguish between that which is required learning, and any other material. The rest of the boys agreed that students rarely read every page of a text book and, while the creative illustrations would prove very helpful if they experienced difficulty understanding a particular concept, they wanted to be able to locate the key ideas quickly and easily in order to study for tests and exams.

The third extract discussed was a piece providing descriptions and examples of deductive and inductive arguments. This extract was also taken from Something to Prove, a chapter on critical thinking, and was selected as an example of purely expositional material. In this piece I was looking for feedback regarding clarity and ease of understanding. Generally, the boys felt that the explanations and examples provided were clear, with only one boy declaring that I needed to 'lose the vampire', a reference to one example that employed a vampire and a late-night telephone call.

At this point, the girls interrupted with a call to 'keep the vampire!' This was my cue to swap groups and commence my discussions with the remaining five students. The girls were already primed, having overheard some of the boys' discussion, and keen to

deliver their feedback. As with the boys, we started the discussion with Emails to Miss Ong. Generally, all of this group were enthusiastic about the idea of the ongoing narrative about Luther as a method of demonstrating philosophical concepts in a real-life setting but, like the boys, wanted to know whether Miss Ong would respond. The girls also said they thought it would be 'weird' for Luther to write to Miss Ong if she never answered his emails. Most agreed that it would be sufficient for Luther to simply allude to her response, without actually adding another component to the text.

Criticisms about Emails included the age at which Luther supposedly engages in sophisticated philosophical dialogue with Miss Ong. Two girls thought it would be more credible if Luther described himself as a little older, possibly a Year Ten student. Others said that as the reader does not have access to details of their discussions, it need not be assumed that the dialogues were beyond a thirteen-year-old's capabilities. The students in this group were comfortable with the notion of Luther and Miss Ong's relationship. One girl suggested that the 'sexual boundaries' of the relationship could be strengthened by changing Miss Ong's marital status to that of a married woman. This idea was deemed unnecessary by the remaining group. All of the girls felt that Luther's emails seemed sincere and did not evoke a sense of inappropriateness. However, they agreed that the postscript on the first email—where Luther says: 'Don't hesitate to put me on your Blocked Senders list if I start to freak you out'—only served to rouse in the reader unwanted, 'creepy stalker' thoughts.

Like the first group, I found it necessary to explain the context of the extract A Bad Idea: the Kombi Van. The girls found the introduction interesting but said it took a while before they could see the point of the story. One girl described this as having to wait too long to get to the 'philosophical punchline'. Despite the length of this piece, four out of five girls perceived value in the idea of using fictional narrative to enhance their understanding of philosophical concepts. Further, the girls believed that the 'stories' would help them to remember key points in tests and exams. The one participant who did not agree said that while she was entertained by the stories, she preferred to 'keep my novels and textbooks separate.'

Group Two, Part A: observations & discussions

The second session of the day was distinctly different from the first. The class size was almost fifty percent larger, a factor that contributed to the general level of noise and distraction in the room. It also reduced the amount of time that could be spent with individual student groups. Following the distribution of reading material and the completion of the questionnaires, participants were gathered in groups of four or five and directed to a central table where discussions were held. Three small-group discussions were conducted, each lasting approximately ten minutes. The class teacher assisted in the logistics of this task, allowing me to maximise my time with the students. Unlike Group One, each discussion group contained a mixture of male and female participants.

The discussions centred on, but were not limited to, the reading material and questions from the questionnaire. Capitalising on my experience with the participants of Group One, I commenced each discussion with a question about Emails to Miss Ong. Generally, the participants deemed Luther's character and fictional journey credible. The students were comfortable with the notion of a university student taking leave to travel and reconsider his future. One student said: 'I think he was believable. He was, like, travelling and he just starts thinking about these things. It's very good.' Similarly, there was positive feedback given about the idea of using a recurring, fictional story in order to illustrate philosophical concepts, with a participant declaring: 'We should all be able to relate philosophy to real life. It makes it feel more real instead of, like, maths.'

As with Group One, there was a mixed response to the idea that Miss Ong does not reply to Luther's emails. Most students felt that there needed to be some indication that Miss Ong has received Luther's communications. One participant summed up the general feeling of students when he said: 'I thought he was a credible character but to send emails to somebody who's not replying to you, that's a teacher, all these intimate details of your life, eventually becomes kind of creepy.' There were a few notable exceptions to this point of view. One student felt that Miss Ong's replies should be taken as a given. She advised: 'You can sort of get that he might have had a response or something. You don't really need to write one.' Another student argued that whether Luther receives, or does not receive, a reply is inconsequential. She theorised: 'Maybe he's, like, reaching into the past, like, looking for what it was like when he was a kid

and had people telling him what to do, and it wasn't, like, scary. Maybe it doesn't matter if she gets them or not.'

Among those students that agreed it was necessary for Miss Ong to reply, most felt that the replies were better implied than stated. When one student argued that it might be worthwhile including Miss Ong's reply at the end of each chapter, the remaining students disagreed on the basis that a separate reply from an authority figure, like a teacher, had the potential to sound patronising. They also argued that too many voices might become confusing. One participant argued: 'You can't really answer them [the emails]. If she's going to, like, respond to that it might confuse the reader, because she'll have her own opinions of the answer.'

There were mixed responses regarding the relationship between Miss Ong and Luther. Like the previous group, no obvious issues appeared. The age difference was not a barrier, nor was the issue of gender. Like Group One, Group Two thought that Luther's fondness for sophisticated philosophical dialogue was a little out of place in Year Eight. However, they also felt that Luther would be likely to have more friends, and therefore less likely to seek out the company of Miss Ong, if he was cast as an upper secondary student. Students were divided on how this should be resolved with most arguing that it was better to leave his age unchanged. The reason given was that as Luther's age at the time of his relationship with Miss Ong is only mentioned once in the emails, any issues of credibility would soon be forgotten anyway. One student recommended simply removing any reference to Year Eight, leaving Luther's age unspecified.

Surprisingly, some participants within Group Two revealed that they were distracted by Miss Ong's name. This came to my attention when one student stated: 'I think the name of the teacher is a bit odd.' The boy's view was quickly followed up with another student saying: 'I just think it's weird, like, this little nerd kid with no friends having big conversations in the courtyard with this Asian teacher. I don't know, maybe she needs a more common name or something.' This sparked interest among the students about the origins of this character's name, and Miss Ong's mysterious first name, designated only by the initial 'Q'. However, when asked whether anyone thought the name should be modified, no participants argued in favour of a change.

Following the discussion on Emails to Miss Ong, I then directed the conversation to A Bad Idea: the Kombi Van. As with Group One, contextuality was an issue. While the

students said they were engaged by the story most felt a little uncertain about how and where the extract fit into the textbook. I explained that each of the ten chapters begins with a fictional element before progressing into the expositional component. While this seemed to alleviate any confusion about context, some students felt that the piece took too long to get to the point. One student said: 'I guess it'd be different if you were reading each chapter as a whole, like, reading a part might be different, but I felt that when you were reading about the Kombi van you kind of got distracted from the real meaning of what it was trying to tell you.' Another offered: 'It draws you in but it just needs to be a bit more compact.' There was general agreement that the piece should 'get to the dialogue a bit faster' and that a little less time should be spent on building the story. Students in this group argued that I must balance the quantity of non-essential reading with the time students have available for reading a textbook. A few students joked that they might be compelled to skip through the book looking for the 'fun stuff' and forget to read the rest.

The final material discussed with Group Two was on inductive and deductive arguments. An extract from a chapter on critical thinking and formal reasoning, this piece was selected to test the intelligibility and clarity of the work. It was also an opportunity to test the more traditional, expositional elements of the textbook. The extract described two types of rational argument and then provided examples in support of each. In all cases, the participants said that they understood the concepts immediately and that the extract was clear. One student said: 'It made sense straight away. The language was good.' Another said: 'I liked this because it was simple. Yeah, I got it straight away.' On the question of the 'vampire' example, the general consensus was summed up by one boy who advised: 'Keep the vampire in there. It'll make people laugh.'

Group One, Part B: observations & discussions

On September 1st, 2010, I returned to the secondary school to complete Part B of the focus group studies. Group One and Group Two contained the same participants, with some absences noted. As in Part A, students were given a selection of reading material and a questionnaire. The extracts used in this session were Arguing from Vagueness, A Community of Inquiry: What is the Value of Travel?, and Vanilla Gray. Once the students had read the extracts and completed the questionnaire, the class was again

arranged into small discussion groups. I commenced the discussion by asking participants whether they felt the dialogue contained in A Community of Inquiry was realistic, and representative, of the way a philosophical community of inquiry (COI) might unfold in a classroom setting. To this question I received a strong 'no'. Many students said that the characters in the COI were too willing to share their own personal perspectives and experiences, something that almost never happens in a high school classroom. Students, I was advised, are encouraged (and prefer) to make contributions to a COI using hypothetical, rather than personal, examples. The participants felt that the characters needed to speak in more abstract terms, explaining that teenagers rarely choose to talk about themselves in a classroom situation. One participant argued: 'This just wouldn't happen in our class, like, we wouldn't be just sharing stories like this. It would be more like—an argument.'

The students also felt the COI unfolded in an unrealistic way, and that the characters were too polite and agreeable. One participant advised: 'It's pretty unrealistic in terms of, like, the progression of discussion.' Another said, "No one made the kind of nihilist argument that maybe travel is just movement from point A to point B, which I think is sometimes a valid argument.' The participants believed that disagreement in a COI is a fundamental feature and necessary for the discussion topic to evolve. This was summed up by a student who argued: 'I think people should disagree because people make their arguments better from disagreeing.'

Participants also criticised the way the facilitator conducted the community of inquiry. One participant offered:

> I felt that the facilitator's input wasn't capitalised on by the students, or
> the people participating in the discussion. When the facilitator
> summarises the concepts they've been discussing, firstly it seems a bit
> sudden. I thought the facilitator would have introduced those concepts a
> bit sooner so the participants could begin to discuss them. Second, I just
> feel that the comments afterwards really don't take that into account.

The group generally agreed that while the dialogue is intended to be an illustration of how a COI might unfold in a classroom, the feedback from the facilitator seemed too contrived and predictable. One student said that she was 'very aware of the fact that

you're being told things,' a trait the skilled facilitator tries to avoid. In this example it was recommended that the facilitator interject more frequently, but contribute less.

I then asked the group to consider the role of humour in Vanilla Gray and Arguing from Vagueness. I wanted to know whether they considered the use of humour a positive feature or a distraction, and to gauge the limits of appropriate humour for their age and for the classroom. Overall, the feedback to both of these extracts was very positive. One student said: 'This particular example I felt was really on-topic. Especially with the summary at the end, it makes sense.' Another agreed: 'I did think that Vanilla Gray was a good length—I think it was really well done, like, even just having, visually, introduction, story and conclusion. It worked really well for me.' Most participants agreed that both pieces lent the concepts interest and that they felt drawn into the scenarios. Notably, both of these extracts were relatively compact compared to the first extract on the community of inquiry. However, a few students highlighted that upon reaching the conclusion, or point, of a scenario it was important to resume a more formal tone. This was achieved in Arguing from Vagueness but some participants contended that Vanilla Gray needed to finish more seriously. One student explained:

> I just felt that the explanation at the end needed to be a bit more formal. Yeah, like the story being informal and everything makes it good and engaging, it's just that the explanation seems too relaxed, I guess. I really noticed the use of 'probably' and 'generally'. It just felt like you were avoiding making a direct statement.

Most participants felt that the style of humour used in Vanilla Gray and Arguing from Vagueness, while a little more perverse than normally found in a high school textbook, was not embarrassing or inappropriate. While few said they were uncomfortable with the images in the extracts, suggestions were offered to soften the impact of the illustrations. For example, the 'golden moustache' referred to in Arguing from Vagueness could be changed to hairy arms or toes. Similarly, the age of Vanilla Gray could be increased in order to avoid potentially disturbing connotations of child abuse. One participant described Vanilla Gray as having 'something a bit Josef Fritzl about it', while another felt that Vanilla's misery was too graphically drawn. She noted: 'I think just the idea of a kid having to live in the garage had enough impact.'

While two participants admitted they found Vanilla's story confronting, participants in this group were generally enthusiastic about injecting humour into the text. Most agreed that abstract concepts are more easily understood when translated into visual images and informal language, and were eager to see more creativity in a text book. One participant said: 'The textbook uses all these words that don't really make much sense but when we discuss them [the concepts] we use our own language, our own words.' Another participant explained that in order to move an idea from the abstract to the concrete, 'We might try to put them into more realistic settings, like you would in your creative sections.'

I then invited the participants to offer any general suggestions they might have for improving the text. Notably, the participants felt it was important to ensure that the creative illustrations moved smoothly and reliably from a simple level to a more complex one. One participant explained: 'The most important thing to me is for there to be that progression—it needs to get more and more complex.' Another cautioned: 'I really like how you're giving relevant examples for each of the concepts, because that's what helps people to understand things but I think you have to make sure the example supports but doesn't dominate.'

One of the participants commented that from the extracts she had read, the text might be better suited to a younger demographic. She explained that as she had studied philosophy in Year Ten the text felt too 'entry-level'. This view was contested by the other participants who felt that the book needed to reflect the concepts required by the curriculum, and should not be tailored to students who have studied some philosophy before Year Eleven. Several students said that they had come to the WACE Philosophy and Ethics course with no prior philosophy experience, and would be disadvantaged by a textbook that assumed knowledge. One boy argued: 'It seems like, just with the language, that it's something that would be accessible to a younger demographic, but then when you look at the concepts raised, like, it's *our* course.'

Group Two, Part B: observations & discussions
The second, and final, session was less orderly than the first. Again, the class size was larger and the noise level was higher. I found that the students, now familiar with my methodology, were more easily distracted during the discussion groups. This familiarity produced both positive and negative effects. Positive, was the instant intimacy I gained

with most of the participants. The students were not as reserved or shy as in the previous week. This resulted in an immediate and comfortable dialogue as soon as I joined the groups. The negative effects included the tendency of participants to interrupt each other in the rush to offer their opinions, and a great deal of background noise from students waiting for their discussion group to begin. As with Group One, the study centred on three extracts, A Community of Inquiry: What is the value of travel?, Arguing from Vagueness, and Vanilla Gray. I commenced my first discussion with the piece on philosophical community of inquiry.

As with the previous groups, Group Two found the extract of the philosophical community of inquiry (COI) unrealistic on several levels. However, the characteristic that provoked the strongest response was one that previous groups did not highlight. The students felt that the COI was trying too hard to appear inclusive while, in reality, the characters were far too homogenous and agreeable to truly represent an in-class inquiry. One student criticised: 'It kind of seemed like it was trying really hard to, like, include everyone. Like, there was one kid from a divorced family and a kid from the country.' Another remarked:

> All the characters seemed really sort of the same. They had different
> names, obviously, but they all seemed to be talking the same way. Like,
> in a real one, you've got people that are more eloquent and others that
> say almost nothing. You get, like, different personalities.

Among Group Two, these views were universal. All of the students felt that in a realistic classroom COI there would be much more disagreement and that, students routinely expressed strong opinions, argued and interrupted each other. They felt that the extract lacked impact because of the polite and friendly interaction between characters. One student exclaimed: 'They argue!', while another complained: 'It wasn't that interesting to me because there weren't any strong opinions.' Several students said that disagreement was integral to a COI For example, one student argued that the exchange between the fictional Emily and Kate would benefit from a third, unconvinced, character. The student argued: 'She said the tango won't affect me unless I do it, which isn't true because, like, you can be affected by the tango by watching it. You could get a bit of an argument in between (Emily and Kate).'

The participants in this group also felt that when the characters made a contribution to the COI they often spoke for too long. Generally, the students agreed that in-class contributions are usually short, and often fragmented. It is not unusual for someone to offer an incomplete idea, or thought, only to have it completed by a second, or third student. One participant advised: 'People don't normally talk for, like, as long'. All of Group Two agreed that the COI needed to be grittier and less polite, an adjustment that would also benefit the facilitator's depiction, which many saw as too intrusive and didactic. The students suggested that the facilitator appear more often during the COI, but say far less. A less civil exchange between characters might also provide more opportunities for the facilitator to demonstrate the rules of a COI. For example, one student suggested: 'The facilitator could say, like, why are you interrupting them?'

The participants in this group also believed that it was unrealistic for a high school student to offer their personal experiences during a COI. Most felt that while the travel examples offered in the extract were realistic, the notion of secondary students sharing their stories in an open forum was highly improbable. The students agreed that the examples were clear and engaging, but suggested that they be launched as hypothetical scenarios rather than real ones. With regard to the examples chosen, the students agreed that the goat-herder had to go, were generally happy with the travel scenarios, and were highly enthusiastic about the food and chocolate pudding examples. As this was the last class before the lunch-break, I was not surprised to be told: 'The food one rocked!'

The attitudes of Group Two toward humour in the text were not dissimilar to that of previous groups. Generally this group had few complaints about the scenario of character, Vanilla Gray, accepting that the scenario was intended as an exaggeration in order to make a philosophical point. 'Vanilla,' one girl observed: 'was like a caricature designed to shock.' Another student said: 'Obviously you've made it to be, like, absurd. You've clarified that later in the story, and that's good.'

The reaction to Vanilla Gray, an allegory of the political perils that could ensue when a social underclass is allowed to develop in a society, was enthusiastically received. One student summarised the general feeling of students when he said: 'Out of the three examples that was the one that, like, I related to, understood, the best.' Most of the students in Group Two said that while there would always be someone to object to confronting illustrations, they felt it was a minority view. One boy offered: 'You get a

lot of people that would really want something like that and then you get a few touchy people who are, like, you can't do that!' Asked if it might be better to 'tone down' the occasionally dark nature of the humour, all agreed that they did not want to be dictated to by the minority view or by political correctness. One student summarised this attitude when he said, 'There's really no point to it [writing for teenagers] if it's boring.' The students in Group Two had one specific criticism of Vanilla Gray. This criticism involved the inclusion of Aunty Audrey, a character included more as an element of humour, rather than possessing any direct bearing on the concept illustrated. Generally, the students complained that this character added unnecessary length to an otherwise compact example. One student criticised: 'It took me a while to get, like, why the aunty now parks her car outside', evidence of unnecessary distraction.

The students complained that Aunty Audrey is a creative writing 'luxury item' that does not need to be there. Also, one student suggested that, in the final analysis of Vanilla Gray, the more serious tone was undermined by a poor word choice. She advised, 'At the end, take away [the word] silly'. Others agreed with the observation that I needed to take the scenario more seriously at this point, and return to formality.

Arguing from Vagueness was also received positively. Several students in Group Two felt that the illustration of this informal fallacy was concise and immediately understandable. As in previous groups, the general consensus was that this scenario approached the 'perfect length' for a fictional scenario, although a few argued that as each philosophical concept was of varying complexity there could be no 'perfect' length. Less a criticism than an observation, a few students suggested I change the 'golden moustache' to lightly hairy underarms. The reason given was that some were perplexed by the concept of a woman with fuzz on her upper lip and that this might also cause others to become distracted and lose concentration.

Finally, the students of Group Two were asked if they had any further observations, comments or suggestions that might contribute to a better text. One student commented that he thought the inclusion of hypothetical or fictional scenarios was a helpful feature in that, 'In the bigger picture I think it makes it more relatable.' A second student echoed this viewpoint with: 'You get a lot of students who kind of like say this doesn't relate to me, or why am I doing this, or what's the point of this and how does it relate to

me and my life and that sort of stuff. You've got real-life examples in there and it's good.'

Results of Data Analysis

The following tables show the opinion of Group One and Group Two to the statements provided. The results for the discussion groups are indicated in red and, unlike the questionnaire results, are a general indicator based on the audio-recorded, oral feedback of each group. The questionnaire results for Group One are shown in blue. The questionnaire results for Group Two are shown in black. Shaded boxes indicate that action to improve the text may be required.

Extracts from Emails to Miss Ong: Message from an Old Student and Fate and Coffee

Statement	*Agree*	*Disagree*	*Mixed Opinion*	*No Comment*
I like the idea of a recurring fictional narrative within a textbook	D.G. One D.G. Two 4 13	1 0	3 0	0 0
I think Luther is a credible character.	D.G. One D.G. Two 5 13	0 0	3 0	0 0
I am comfortable with the idea that Miss Ong does not reply to Luther's emails.	0 0	D.G. One D.G. Two 2 2	0 0	6 11
I think Miss Ong should reply explicitly to Luther's emails.	0 0	D.G. One D.G. Two 0 0	0 0	8 13
I think that Miss Ong's replies should be implied in the text.	D.G. One D.G. Two 0 0	0 0	0 0	8 13

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Mixed Opinion	No Comment
I think Luther's emails should be written using more sentence fragments.	1 0	D.G. Two 0 0	D.G. One 0 0	7 13
I think Luther's relationship with a female high school teacher is unusual but credible.	D.G. One D.G. Two 8 0	1 0	0 0	0 13
I found Miss Ong's name distracting.	0 0	D.G. One 0 0	D.G. Two 0 0	8 13
I think a Year 8 student is unlikely to be having deep philosophical conversations with a teacher.	1 0	0 0	0 0	7 13

Extracts from A Bad Idea: the Kombi van

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Mixed Opinion	No Comment
I think the idea of commencing each new chapter with a creative illustration is valuable.	D.G. One D.G. Two 4 4	1 0	0 0	3 9
I think this creative scenario is too long.	5 8	0 1	D.G. One D.G. Two 0 0	3 4
I think the dialogue used is realistic.	D.G. One D.G. Two 0 0	0 0	0 0	8 13
I can easily distinguish between fact and fiction in this piece.	D.G. One D.G. Two 0 0	0 0	0 0	8 13

Extracts from Inductive and Deductive Arguments.

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Mixed Opinion	No Comment
I think the examples used were clear and immediately understood.	D.G. One D.G. Two 6 11	1 2	1 0	0 0
I think the examples used were interesting and engaging.	D.G. One D.G. Two 6 13	1 0	0 0	1 0

Extracts from A Community of Inquiry: What is the value of travel?

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Mixed Opinion	No Comment
I think the extract is a realistic depiction of an in-class COI	1 5	D.G. One D.G. Two 4 3	0 5	2 1
I think the selection of characters in this extract is credible.	2 6	D.G. One D.G. Two 2 2	0 1	3 5
I think the dialogue in the COI is realistic.	3 7	D.G. One D.G. Two 2 5	0 0	2 2
I think the role of the facilitator is accurately portrayed.	1 1	D.G. One D.G. Two 1 1	0 0	5 12
I think the examples used are engaging and interesting.	D.G. Two 3 3	0 0	D.G. One 1 0	3 11

Extract from Vanilla Gray

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Mixed Opinion	No Comment
I think the examples used were clear and immediately understood.	D.G. One D.G. Two 4 12	0 0	0 2	3 0
I think the examples used were interesting and engaging.	D.G. One D.G. Two 4 13	0 0	0 0	3 1
I found the depiction of Vanilla Gray's situation a little uncomfortable.	0 1	D.G. Two 2 0	D.G. One 0 0	5 13
I think the humour used in this extract is appropriate for a teenaged readership.	D.G. One D.G. Two 1 8	0 2	1 0	5 4

Extract from Arguing from Vagueness

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Mixed Opinion	No Comment
I think the examples used were clear and immediately understood.	D.G. One D.G. Two 6 9	1 1	0 4	0 0
I think the examples used were interesting and engaging.	D.G. One D.G. Two 5 11	0 1	0 1	2 1
I found the 'hairiness' example embarrassing or inappropriate.	0 0	D.G. One D.G. Two 1 0	0 0	6 14

I think the humour used in this extract is appropriate for a teenaged readership.	D.G. One D.G. Two 5 9	0 0	0 0	2 4

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