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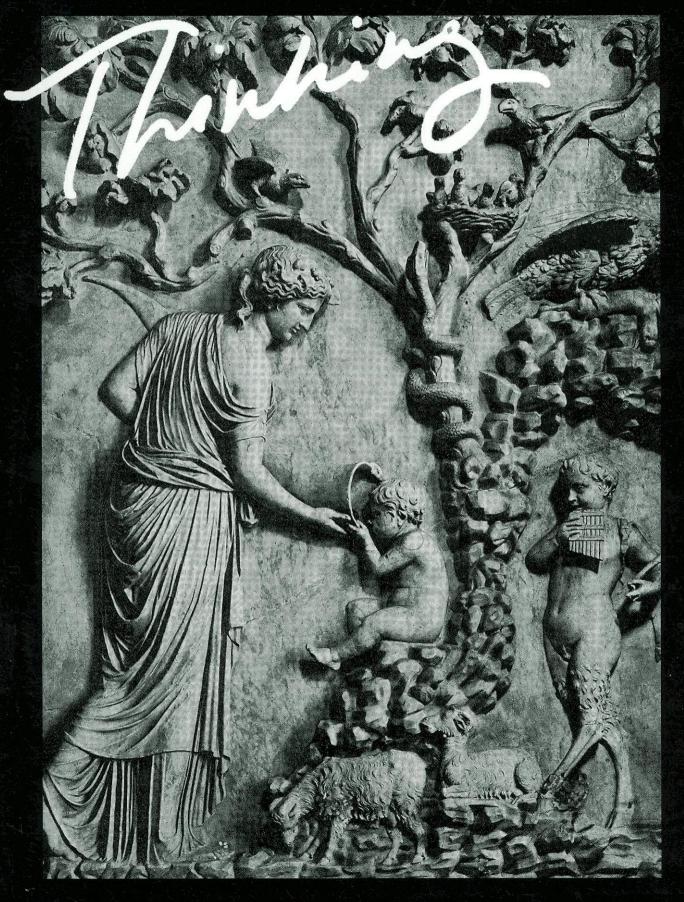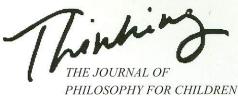Part of the Social and Philosophical Foundations of Education Commons

Thinking

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Cover: The nymph Leucothea (Ino) gives the infant Dionysius a drink from the Horn of Plenty. Antique bas-relief, Lateran Museum, Rome.   Insde front cover: Roman Coins: reproduction. Page 10: Head of a Cycladic idol, third millennium B.C. Page 18 Allegorical Figure, 1672 - 75 marble, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Page35: Apollo. Lemnos, circa 480 B.C. Page 46: Source Unkown. Page 49: Source Unkown. Inside back cover: Dionysus: Bas-relief from Herculaneum, National Museum, Naples.

Thinking in Stories

by Gareth B. Matthews

Peter Catalanotto, *Emily's Art,* New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001.

On Monday Ms. Fair tells her first-grade class that there will be an art contest on Friday. A prize ribbon, she explains, will be given to the best painting in each grade.

"How will we know which is best?" asks Emily.

"A judge will decide that," explains Ms. Fair.

The children begin discussing the idea of a contest. They argue over whether chocolate or vanilla is best. "Does the judge know which is better?" asks Emily.

Ms. Fair begins to respond to Emily's question when Jake asks whether, if he loses the contest, the judge will put him in jail. Ms. Fair reassures Jake that he needn't worry about that, but she never returns to deal with Emily's crucial question.

Later on that day Emily paints a butterfly. Emily's best friend, Kelly, is wowed by Emily's butterfly. She asks Emily to show her how to paint a butterfly. Emily does.

Emily then paints a picture of her family. The next day she paints a glowing picture of Ms. Fair. Kelly paints a red butterfly that day.

The next day Emily paints a gorgeous picture of herself with Kelly. Kelly herself paints a purple butterfly that day.

The next day Emily paints a colorful picture of her dog, Thor. Kelly paints a green butterfly. That day Ms. Fair tells the children to choose their favorite painting for the contest. Emily chooses her painting of Thor, which is now her favorite painting.

Emily doesn't sleep well that night. She is worried about the contest and about how the judge will decide which painting is best.

On Friday morning the children go to the gym, where the walls are filled with their paintings. Soon the judge arrives and begins looking at each of the artworks on the walls of the gym. She is immediately attracted to Emily's bright and engaging picture of Thor. But she takes Thor to be a rabbit. And she likes rabbits. Told that the animal is not a rabbit, but a dog, she reacts with repulsion. It seems a dog once attacked her and tore her dress. She awards the prize ribbon to Kelly's butterfly instead of Emily's dog.

Shocked by her loss, Emily resolves not to paint again. She begins to feel faint. Ms. Fair, noticing how bad Emily looks, drops her off at the office of the school nurse.

I won't reveal how this engaging and beautifully illustrated story ends, except to say that Emily survives her trauma, as does her friendship with Kelly. And we readers are left to ponder the judge's failure of taste and the grander question of how aesthetic judgment should be understood.

I was put onto this story by Professor Thomas Wartenberg, who was himself introduced to it by one of his students at Mt. Holyoke College. Tom teaches a course there that prepares college students to do philosophy with the kids in a nearby elementary school. One of the early assignments in Tom's college class is to find a children's story that invites philosophical discussion, perhaps by problematizing a concept that the children can discuss. One of Tom's students chose *Emily's Art*.

It was an inspired choice. The story puts out the suggestion that aesthetic judgment is entirely subjective, like preferring vanilla to chocolate, or winter to summer. But, if that is right, there can hardly be much point in having an art contest. All we could learn from the contest is something about the purely subjective preferences of the judge.

In fact what we learn about the judge in the story is that she likes rabbits and butterflies, but not dogs. And for this reason she likes pictures of butterflies and rabbits, but not pictures of dogs.

If we are honest, we will have to admit that, for most of us, what paintings are paintings *of* will very likely play at least some minimal role in whether we prefer one painting over another. But surely that can't be all there is to aesthetic judgment, can it? If not, why not? Can we come up with some argument to show that there must be more to it than that?

Well, a good first thing to say is that there might be two or more paintings of butterflies, or of rabbits. And surely it makes sense to say that one painting of a butterfly could be a better painting than another. Now what could be a good reason for saying that one painting is a better painting of a butterfly or rabbit than another?

The attractive reproductions in this book make clear that Emily can use colors boldly and imaginatively. Thus, asked why she has given Ms. Fair wings (the bright yellow wings stand out against the purple dress and shoes Ms. Fair is wearing in Emily's picture), Emily explains, "Because she's so nice, like an angel."

The children who discuss *Emily's Art* with you, or in your class, may not be able to agree on what criteria the judge should have used in judging this art contest. But there are ample materials in this beautifully illustrated and provocative storybook to move them away from the idea that judging an art contest is, or ought to be, like deciding whether to have a chocolate or vanilla ice cream.

— Gareth B. Matthews —

Philosophical Experience in Childhood

STEINAR BOYUM

Those who argue for an elementary school curriculum containing philosophy often point to a child's propensity for wonder. Referring to Socrates' questioning, they rhetorically ask: Isn't this wondering essential to philosophy? Perhaps it is. Yet there are other ways philosophy may enter into the lives of children. Remember that Socrates was not only asking questions; he also claimed to have received philosophical insight through a kind of *experience*, namely the perception of ideas. And this might not be as lofty or obscure as it seems today, for perhaps even children can encounter philosophy through certain experiences. Are there experiences that may bring a person into philosophy, analogous to the way some experiences may lead one into religion?

Consider this: One evening I am out walking on my own. I stop and look up at the sky. In the silence of the night I start thinking: Who am I? Does my life have a purpose? Why am I here? This is an example of wonder. But now consider this: A boy, aged 16, has run away from his strict and religious parents. On Christmas Eve he finds himself alone, walking the streets of the capital. Doubting the God of his parents has driven him to despair. He thinks: Who am I? Does my life have a purpose? Why am I here? His questions are identical to those asked in wonder under the starry sky. Nevertheless, they are not primarily expressions of *wonder*. And the boy's questions are not merely questions, but *problems,* arising out of crisis and confusion. The difference between these two cases should be enough to make one reconsider the centrality of wonder in philosophy.

Now the runaway's anxious questions did not arise *ex nihilo.* What made them crop up? It may have happened through gradual development, through conversation with friends or through reading. But his doubt may also have set in suddenly as a consequence of specific experiences, per-haps in connection with dramatic events: Hiding in the bathroom at night he sees his father beating his mother, and in that instant he knows that no one can be trusted and that everything may be different from what it seems. Or perhaps the questions are induced by quite ordinary events: He observes a cat hunting, killing and eating a little mouse and is struck by how void of mercy and meaning the world is. Or it may be an "aesthetic" experience: while watching a film about the Holocaust, he sees the ultimate loneliness of the suffering individual laid bare in front of him. These are all experiences that may have changed his philosophical sensibility, possibly forever. In the following pages, I will investigate such experiences as these.[1]

My intention is to extract a concept of philosophical experience from two literary examples. I have chosen literary sources because the elusive nature of philosophical experiences makes them hard to recognize in ordinary life. Nevertheless, elusiveness does not mean insignificance. indeed, it is one of the merits of novels that they show us this. However, when I proceed to the essential features of philosophical experiences, I will refer to non-literary examples whenever they clearly exhibit a particular characteristic.

The philosophical method used can be termed "logical grammar", after the model of Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*.[2] In employing such a method, one tries to achieve clarity and dispel confusion by describing the patterns of human life in which concepts are entrenched. However, when the object to be investigated is a kind of experience that does not have standard or established ways of being expressed, grammar of the Wittgensteinian kind is closely related to phenomenology. And this is exactly the case for philosophical experiences: In these cases we must describe different ways in which we are inclined to express such experiences, and we will have to utilize our *own* inclinations in doing so. In this respect, it will resemble a phenomenological description.

It is not my intention to argue for the truth or falsity of the various philosophical insights and experiences that I will mention. Neither am I able, within the context of con-

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ceptual analysis, to show how widespread philosophical experiences actually are in childhood. In the end, a conviction of their existence and importance can only be produced by the readers recognizing themselves (or stories they have heard) in my account. In other words, this is a philosophical, hence conceptual, investigation. If someone wanted to conduct empirical research into such experiences, then it would presuppose a philosophical explication of the concept, since otherwise we would not even know which cases would *count* as philosophical experiences.

Philosophical Aspects

At the outset, "philosophical experience" refers to an experience that one is inclined to express in philosophical terms.[3] The word "experience" usually denotes either a conscious process that a person undergoes at a particular time (e.g. pain) or a skill that a person develops over time ("an experienced teacher"). Of course, these two are often linked: By undergoing experiences of a certain kind (e.g. sexual experiences) one may acquire a corresponding "skill" (e.g. to be sexually experienced). The first use of "experience" is a count noun; it refers to something occurring for a reasonably specific period of time, and this use is what is involved in the concept of philosophical experience. A philosophical experience, then, is something a person undergoes at a particular time (and place), and which he expresses philosophically, usually in the form of an (professed) insight. It is not, in itself, a skill or ability, but it does have a counterpart in the second use of "experience": By undergoing philosophical experiences one may acquire a philosophical *sensibility*, which shapes one's actions, thoughts and perceptions. It is perhaps the central feature of philosophical experiences that they can create such a sensibility, which, in part, constitutes one's identity.

On this account, a philosophical experience seems almost to be a kind of *perception:* one perceives an object (or a situation as a whole) in a way that one expresses philosophically in the form of an insight. Now, even though the concept of philosophical experience is easily distorted when conceived of as a vision, it is still possible for us to use a peculiar kind of perception as its model. In Part II of his *Philosophical Investigations* Ludwig Wittgenstein makes some remarks on what he calls *seeing-as* or *seeing aspects*. His key example, already known from Gestalt psychology, is the now famous duck-rabbit figure. Strange as it may seem, the transition from seeing a duck to seeing a rabbit shares important features with philosophical experiences; there are remarkable similarities between the two.

Aspects are peculiar in that they are located ontologically in between the subjective and the objective, for is the change of aspect from duck to rabbit an objective change or something "in the mind"? We do not know how to answer this; it is neither, and both. Aspects seem, so to speak, to signal the existence of a field *beyond* subjectivity and objectivity; or if one prefers a more modest description, as-

pects combine subjective and objective features without being in any way intersubjective. A change of aspect is subjective in the sense that it does not correspond to a change in the world described by physics. Furthermore, it is subjective, insofar as we may look at the same but still not see the same; you may not be able to see the aspect that I see no matter how hard you try (the duck-rabbit figure perhaps obscures this important point). Nevertheless, aspects are objective in that they approach and confront us from the outside.[4] This is what inclines us here to speak of *seeing* as opposed to, say, thinking or interpretation. Finally, aspects share with things objective the feature of being "out of our hands"; we are unable to force or control the dawning of an aspect, although we can set up favourable conditions for it (e.g. by staring or relaxing). In occurring independently of us at a particular time and in a particular place, it is a kind of *event*, not an action; it is not something we *do* – it is something we are struck by.

All these characteristics apply to philosophical experiences as well. As a preliminary characterization of philosophical experiences, we may therefore say that they are *experiences of philosophical aspects*. Yet this rudimentary account is still far too abstract. We will therefore proceed to some literary examples, in the hope of eliciting more concrete attributes of the concept of philosophical experience.[5]

Case 1: Ian McEwan, Atonement

Briony, 13 years old, has written a play that she plans to perform, together with three cousins, to celebrate the visit of her older brother. Unfortunately the project does not succeed, and Briony finds herself alone in the rehearsal-room, brooding over her failure. Philosophy sets in:

> She bent her finger and straightened it. The mystery was in the instant before it moved, the dividing moment between not moving and moving, when her intention took effect. It was like a wave breaking. If she could only find herself at the crest, she thought, she might find the secret of herself, that part of her that was really in charge. She brought her forefinger closer to her face and stared at it, urging it to move …. When did it know to move, when did she know to move it? There was no catching herself out. It was either-or. There was no stitching, no seam, and yet she knew that behind the smooth continuous fabric was the real self – was it her soul? – which took the decision to cease pretending, and gave the final command (pp. 35-36).[6]

These thoughts then slide into another philosophical theme, the so-called "problem of other minds," but now the wonder gains a slightly anxious undertone:

… one mystery bred another: was everyone else really as alive as she was? … did her sister really matter to herself, was she as valuable to herself as Briony was? Was being Cecilia just as vivid an affair as being Briony? Did her sister also have a real self concealed behind a breaking wave, and did she spend time thinking about it, with a finger held up to her face … If the answer was yes, then the world, the social world, was unbearably complicated, with two billion voices, and everyone's thoughts striving in equal importance and everyone's claim on life as intense, and everyone thinking they were unique, when no one was. Once could drown in irrelevance. But if the answer was no, then Briony was surrounded by machines, intelligent and pleasant enough on the outside, but lacking the bright and private *inside* feeling she had (p. 36).

These are well-known thoughts for those who have reflected on the mystery of other minds. Importantly, it is a kind of thinking.more specifically, a kind of wonder. bordering on perplexity. A certain distance characterizes it; Briony has trouble realizing what her reflection tells her must be the case: "She knew [that everyone else had thoughts like hers], but only in a rather arid way; she didn't really feel it" (p. 36). In the grip of philosophical reflection, she is unable to see or understand how other minds can exist. Everything seems utter chaos; she loses her grip on reality: "The self-contained world she had drawn with clear and perfect lines had been defaced with the scribble of other minds …" (p. 36). She notes the difference between the difficulty of the real world, which she is now philosophising over, and the simpler world in which she feels more at home, the world of fiction, where there is no gap between words *(*"the others have minds like I do"*)* and understanding (that other minds really do exist).

At this point something crucial occurs; wonder is superseded by a philosophical experience: She looks out of the window and notices, down by the water fountain, her older sister and her childhood friend Robbie, both home from their studies in Cambridge. Suddenly, her sister undresses and jumps into the fountain. Then, after climbing out again, she immediately disappears into the house, without exchanging words with Robbie at all. Briony is confused – the event is so illogical; it doesn't mesh with her ideas about love and marriage. And this confusion becomes a sort of revelation for her.[7]

This sequence of events does not meet Briony's expectations because she expects human relations to be as they are in stories: easy to understand and with a clearly recognizable moral pattern. Watching the strange proceedings by the fountain shatters her picture of the world. Yet this very strangeness is pregnant with a philosophical insight concerning other minds. Precisely the fact that she does not understand forces her to acknowledge the separateness of

other minds: Much of what people say and do does not conform to our expectations of what life is or should be. Exactly this mismatch between my mind and other people is what their "otherness" consists in. Now Briony understands the meaning of what she formerly could not fathom: the independent, and therefore inherently problematic, existence of other minds (" … it wasn't only wickedness and scheming that made people unhappy … it was the failure to grasp the simple truth that other people are as real as you" (p.40)). The gap between words and understanding has now been bridged; her philosophical experience has given her the insight to fill the abyss that wonder created or discovered. Now she not only *knows* that other people have their own minds, she *realizes* it, for recognition of their separate minds forces itself on her.

Case 2: Marcel Proust, Combray

The next example is from one the most sophisticated childhood recollections in literature, Marcel Proust's *Combray*, the first book of his great cycle. We enter the novel when the young boy, who we might suppose is young Marcel himself, has convinced himself that he lacks the necessary talent to become a writer, perhaps due to his meeting (and loosing) love. On his way home to Combray from Guermantes, seated at the top of the family carriage with the driver next to him, his mood shifts once again:

> At a bend in the road I experienced, suddenly, that special pleasure, which bore no resemblance to any other, when I caught sight of the twin steeples of Martinville, on which the setting sun was playing, while the movement of the carriage and the windings of the road seemed to keep them continually changing their position … In ascertaining and noting the shape of their spires, the changes of aspect, the sunny warmth of their surfaces, I felt that I was not penetrating to the full depth of my impression, that something more lay behind that mobility, that luminosity, something which they seemed at once to contain and to conceal.[8]

Earlier, he describes the experience this way:

> Then, quite apart from all those literary preoccupations, and without definite attachment to anything, suddenly a roof, a gleam of sunlight reflected from a stone, the smell of a road would make me stop still, to enjoy the special pleasure that each of them gave me, and also because they appeared to be concealing, beneath what my eyes could see, something which they invited me to approach and seize from them, but which, despite all my efforts, I never managed to discover. As I felt that the mysterious object was

to be found in them, I would stand there in front of them, motionless, gazing, breathing, endeavouring to penetrate with my mind beyond the thing seen or smelt.

Marcel is here struck by how each thing or situation seems to have a mystical kernel that the mind can only glimpse. Such an experience is not as common as the sudden realization of the separateness of other minds that we met in McEwan's novel; nevertheless, there are parallels to it in the history of philosophy. It may be interpreted as a poetical version of the medieval thesis *individuum est ineffabile*. Alternatively, the experience can be seen as the root of the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, at least of this philosophy as it is often interpreted: Behind every impression or perception there is an unknowable thing that, in its absoluteness, is forever out of our reach ("Das Ding-an-sich").

We will now proceed to an account of the essential features of the kind of philosophical experience had by Briony and Marcel. To introduce some order into my exposition I will arrange these features under four different headings: *concreteness, idiosyncrasy, intensity, and significance*.

Concreteness

There is a crucial difference between Marcel's experience and the philosophical theories of the scholastics and Kant. For in Proust, this kind of experience is explicitly *opposed* to abstract philosophical ideas. He says of his experiences:

> It was certainly not any impression of this kind that could or would restore the hope I had lost of succeeding one day in becoming an author and poet, for each of them was associated with some material object devoid of any intellectual value, and suggesting no abstract truth. But at least they gave me an unreasoning pleasure, the illusion of a sort of fecundity of mind; and in that way distracted me from the tedium, from the sense of my own impotence which I had felt whenever I had sought a philosophic theme for some great literary work.

In Marcel's view, what distinguishes a philosophical experience from a philosophical theory (or "idea") is the concrete fullness of the first, and the emptiness and powerlessness he feels in facing the latter. Even though Marcel implies a downgrading of the importance of theory that we will not adopt here, he still points to the distinguishing trait of an experience, viz. its *concreteness*: it is intimately connected to the particular time and place in which it occurs. This means that the relation between a philosophical experience and its occasion is not like the relation between a thesis (or theory) and an example. An example can always be exchanged for another example without this changing the

meaning of the thesis. It is typical of this kind of experience, though, that the person having the experience finds it hard to imagine that the same experience could be had with regards to another object, for the distinguishing trait of a philosophical experience is that its insight or content is *tied* to its concrete object and the situation in which it is experienced. In other words, with regards to theories or theses, there is a sharp distinction between matters of *genesis* and matters of *validity*, but this is not the case with philosophical experiences.

On the one hand, the concreteness of philosophical experience lends the insight of the experience its peculiar power; the concrete object seems to be an embodiment of the insight to such a degree that the insight takes on the object's substantiality—its permanence and unavoidability—something that "only words" cannot capture. On the other hand, the concrete attachment bestows a certain instability on the insight. When the concrete object or situation is lost or forgotten, the insight itself threatens to fade way. This is central in Proust's novel: Marcel tries to preserve his philosophical experience by inculcating into his mind the objects that gave rise to it; these mental pictures, he hopes, will keep the experience fresh and alive. Yet he does not succeed; all that is left is "a confused mass of different images, under which must have perished long ago the reality of which I used to have some foreboding.…" In losing the concrete object, he loses the revelation.[9]

What Marcel could have done, though, was to convert his experience into a theory or thesis, and to preserve his insight in that way.[10] It would perhaps not preserve the personal importance it had, since it could not bring the hidden reality back to *life*. For that reason, people of Marcel's temperament would prefer to lose the insight rather than "anaesthetize" it into a theory. On the other hand, converting the insight into a theory would take it into a more rational realm, where it is made available to other people and can be argued for or against. What some condemn as an empty, free-floating theory of no personal importance, others praise for its objectivity and rationality. Conversely, what some value for its personal intensity, others discard as obscure subjectivity. I do not want to take sides in such a debate here; I only want to point out that, in cutting the ties between insight and object, one is no longer treating the insight as an expression of an experience. Rather, one is treating it as a theory.

However, a philosophical experience shares an essential feature with a theory or thesis. For even though the insight is woven inextricably into a concrete situation, it is formulated *generally*. Marcel's philosophical experience is not expressed as an insight into the nature of only a certain stone or country road; it seems rather to him that his peculiar perception of a particular thing represents an insight into the nature of *all* things. In other words, a philosophical experience is marked by being treated and expressed as an *embodiment* of the insight; its object is a "symbol" in the Romantic sense of the term. The particular object and the

general insight become inseparable; the particular expresses the general as a face expresses an emotion.

Due to this internal relation between insight and object, the communication of philosophical experiences is a precarious affair. I may express a certain experience by saying: "It is as though all the world is just a surface; what's underneath is impossible to know." And you may reply "Oh yes, I know exactly what you mean." But the tone of your voice seems to prove that you do not. I say to myself: "He has no idea what I mean; he has never experienced such a thing." On the other hand, if your response convinces me that you actually do understand, then I may think: "He really knows what I mean; he must have experienced the same thing." These formulations demonstrate that in order to understand another person's expression of a philosophical experience, one must have had something like the same experience oneself.[11] Yet what does it mean to have had the "same experience"? In the end, that one is inclined to express it in the same way, which means that there is an internal relation between the experience and the expression of it. Understanding the expression of a philosophical expression is to have had the experience oneself, which again means to express it in the same way.[12] It is crucial for any teacher or parent to be aware of such connections; to say "I know what you mean" without being able to show that you really do—that is, without showing that you have experienced the same—will only make the child suspicious and, as a consequence, reticent.

Some may fear that this annihilates the rationality of philosophy, since it appears to make genuine disagreement impossible. Disagreement normally presupposes understanding, but in order to understand the expression of a philosophical experience, one must have had the experience oneself, in which case you would not disagree. This worry, though, is groundless, for the rationality of philosophical theory and argument is left intact. Agreement and disagreement simply play a different role in speaking about one's experience of the world than they do in the realm of theory and argument. To "disagree" with (the expression of) a philosophical experience is to confess that you do not understand, that is, that you do not see what I see, feel what I feel – that you are *different* from me. This should make it abundantly clear that philosophical experiences are something quite different from philosophical theories, which are characterized by an external relation between understanding and experience (no particular experience is needed to understand a theory), and a one-way internal relation between understanding and agreement (you must understand a theory to agree with it, but not the other way around).[13]

Idiosyncrasy

Naturally, such an internal relation between understanding and experience would not be much of a problem if most of us actually *shared* all philosophical experiences. However, even though there are some "archetypical" philosophical experiences, they nevertheless contribute more towards exhibiting differences between people rather than dissolving such differences. Although some of us may have a vague idea of what Marcel is pointing to, most people will find it difficult to really get a grip on it. This may seem like a bad excuse for a lack of verbal or pedagogical ability on my part, but the difficulty actually highlights a central feature of every philosophical experience, namely its *idiosyncratic* character.

Perhaps some will recognize the experience expressed by the words "Things felt, somehow, *unreal*." Now, asserted about a highly unexpected event, it would perhaps be unexceptional; but what if it was meant as saying something about *everything*, that is, as saying "It is as though everything is unreal, that all is but a game"? Then it will seem dangerously close to an absurdity, though for the person uttering these words it may be absolutely fundamental—crucial, yet idiosyncratic. Something of the same applies to expressions that do not at first sight seem idiosyncratic at all, perhaps because they have become commonplaces in academic philosophy. For instance, "There is a deep gap between what people say or do and what they in fact feel." In saying this, one does not only mean that people *sometimes* lie or pretend. Rather, one expresses a sense that *everything* a person does is unreliable and that it is *impossible* to *ever* know another person—an experience which professional philosophy has "de-experienced" into a theory, and which we therefore have become unable to recognize as deeply peculiar.

What makes these expressions idiosyncratic is that they dislocate words and phrases from their normal context. They are formed by transferring words from the contexts in which they are ordinarily used and learned, to radically different contexts: From using "unreal" for something particular as distinct from something else, to using it for referring to the world as a whole. Wittgenstein called this using words in a "secondary sense."[14] He also noted how one's fundamental perspective on the world could be expressed through such a creative employment of language. One of his examples—"Suddenly I felt absolutely *safe*; nothing whatsoever can harm me"—may even be interpreted as an instance of a philosophical experience.[15] Such an idiosyncratic way of handling words is perhaps related to religious language. It is often observed that when a Christian applies words like "care," "love" or "power" to God, he wants them to have an entirely different meaning from what they have in social contexts, but they still have a meaning that can only be expressed by using exactly those words. Stanley Cavell calls it using words in "a heightened sense."[16] A similar transfiguration of ordinary words is characteristic for secondary sense, and consequently, for the expression of philosophical experiences.

Using words in a secondary sense—risking absurdity, but nonetheless attaining meaningfulness—is hard. We have seen the difficulties it can create for communication. In addition, it is often hard for the individual himself to find

a way of expressing his experience. This is the difficulty of understanding one's experience, of understanding oneself. I may feel forced to express an experience in words that are, in a sense, above my comprehension. Asked to explain, I am unable to say what I meant. Uncertain of whether it made sense at all, I hesitate: "I don't know … it is as though … but don't ask me to explain …." This is often dismissed as whimsical, obscure and irresponsible. And certainly, hesitation and elusiveness may at times be signs of sloppiness and flippancy. At other times, though, it may express seriousness and authenticity, especially when touching upon something of crucial and personal importance. Indeed, on such occasions, ease and confidence may be considered a sign that one is *not* speaking from the depth of one's soul. Furthermore, confidence may turn into doubt under the gaze of other people: I may begin to doubt the adequacy and meaning of my own expression when I see the incomprehensibility in the other's eyes. This might lead me to reject the experience: "What was I talking about? Have I lost my mind?" or I may withdraw only the expression of it, and hide the experience inside. Most teenagers, I think, will recognize what a painful lesson this can be.

Philosophical experiences are also idiosyncratic in the sense that they are characteristic or personal. Together they form one's philosophical sensibility, which is felt to be uniquely one's own. If you do not share my philosophical sensibility, you would not, for that reason, be excluded from knowing me fairly well, even extremely well. Nevertheless, an elusive core deep within me would be inaccessible to you. Only in exceptional cases does disagreement over theories touch that personal nucleus. Yet with philosophical experiences, this is the rule, since they partly constitute my identity and my unique perspective. This is not disproved by the fact that we may share philosophical experiences, for agreement in sensibility would not stop me considering it uniquely my own. Instead I would feel that you and I are, fundamentally and perhaps even mysteriously, in harmony, which shows how philosophical experiences can touch the heart of my identity – my "spirit," if you like.

Even the connotations of "idiosyncrasy" with sensation and sensitivity are particularly fitting. Once again, there are striking similarities to aesthetic experience. If I am not able to convey to you by words how I have seen or heard a piece of art or music, then in the end I can only say: "But can't you hear? You must hear it!" No more arguments will do. Only by seeing what I see or hearing what I hear can you understand what I mean. And the same goes for philosophical experiences: They define how I see things, how I perceive the world. Hence philosophical sensibility is the whiskers sensing the corona of being. Usually, such a sensibility is formed during childhood and adolescence.

Intensity

A philosophical experience is characterized by a certain *intensity*: in the experience one feels that a certain knowl-

edge or insight comes to life, has a special power*,* or is peculiarly close. One way of expressing this intensity is by drawing a contrast between the insight given in the experience, and something one already knows. This contrast may be voiced in numerous ways, for instance: I already knew that other people have separate minds, but now I *realize* it; I have always agreed that the universe is inherently meaningless, but now I *see* it; I always thought that I understood the word "freedom," but now I know what it *means*. Prior to her experience, Briony formulates it as a distinction between knowing and feeling: I know other people have minds like me, but I am not able to *feel* it. Putting the key words above ("realize," "see," "means" and "feel") in italics is not arbitrary; it mirrors how speakers may stress certain words to express that there is now an extra dimension to their knowledge. Indeed, the intensification of already existing knowledge is often only detected in other people from *how* they say their words, not from the words in themselves.[17]

Importantly, the intensity of a philosophical experience may also be articulated as a contrast between (just) words and (genuine) knowledge: "It is one thing to say the words, quite another to *know."* Occasionally, the experience appears too intense for language as such: words, any word whatsoever, seem insufficient; they are too weak compared to the intensity of the experience—only by changing my life, I may feel, can I express the insight. Professional philosophers may argue that this is equivalent to obscurantism, to make one's assertions immune from criticism by taking refuge in the ineffable. It is not my task, though, to moralize. Trying to understand these phenomena is neither to condone nor to condemn them. Yet the very least one can do is to reflect on the philosophical significance of the fact that most people, especially teenagers, find it difficult to express their deepest experiences and most fundamental sensibility. Are they just lacking words or is there something words cannot say?

As long as the philosophical experience is fresh in mind, be it for a minute or a lifetime, the insight it incorporates feels unavoidable. It tells us something we cannot ignore, but must confront. Even in the face of arguments against the insight it has given us, we are inclined to hold fast to it. Admittedly, strong and varied arguments, or contrary experiences, may get us to admit that the professed insight was an illusion. Nevertheless, there are differences between theories and experiences in this respect. It is always possible that a theory can leave one cold; even though one accepts and defends it, it does not necessarily *affect* us. Professional philosophers may adopt scepticism without changing their lives in any way. A philosophical experience, on the other hand, speaks with a voice that cannot be shut out—it must be taken into consideration. Even if I were to dislike or be afraid of what it reveals, I cannot avoid it: Either I accept it, make it a part of my (view of) life, or I deny it, that is, repress it, at the risk of not being true to myself.

In this respect, philosophical experiences differ not only from theories, but also from wonderment. There is a gap between the wonder and the life of the wonderer; an instance of wonder may remain an isolated episode from which one returns unchanged—and unharmed. Of course, wonder may *gain* a personal meaning and importance. In order for it to gain this importance, though, it is necessary to *bridge* the gap between wonder and life, to *apply* the content of the wonder to life. And one may not even want or be able to apply it in this way. In that case, the wonder remains external to the rest of one's life, a cogwheel that does not engage with the rest of life's machinery. Philosophical experiences, on the other hand, make the bridging of the gap between philosophy and life redundant; they are of *immediate* importance.

Significance

What is the significance of philosophical experiences? Do they have any genuine influence on our lives? It is not possible to answer these questions in general. Some experiences may be forgotten at once, while others may change us fundamentally. It all depends on the particular case, the particular life-context in which they occur. Nevertheless, I would like to mention some fascinating ways in which they may be incorporated into one's life.

One obvious possibility, all too easily overlooked, is that they are included among those events the significance of which we remain uncertain, even puzzled. Sometimes, experiences of this kind fade from a distance, perhaps even to the point of being brushed aside as illusions or absurdities. In the grip of the experience, it is felt to be of crucial importance, characterized by a fullness of meaning seldom encountered. Yet as the situation that gave rise to the experience recedes in time, it may seem rather like a peculiar illusion. As long as the concrete situation is fresh in mind, that is, as long as one is able to re-experience the relevant aspect in one's imagination, then the philosophical experience seems meaningful and important. When the expression of the experience is no longer an immediate answer to a perception, it may grow fainter – in the end one may even conclude that it is absurd; the experience was nothing more than a fantasy. This conclusion can be strengthened by the idiosyncrasy of the experience; if it is in tension with ordinary life, it may have to yield when practical matters once again dominate. But the experience may also be *revived* by later events; once again it is felt to reveal an insight of crucial importance. In this way, a philosophical experience can be characterized by a certain instability that makes it alternate between insight and irrelevance. This instability can be a major motivation for transforming the experience into a theory; since a philosophical theory is (more) independent of individual experience, holding such a theory may serve as a stable position that provides continuity in one's life. If one is to tell the story of one's life, then important parts of it would consist of dramatic events and their influence upon us: love, death, parenthood, etc. Philosophical experiences may arise out of such events, but in that case their philosophical lesson is often less important than the emotional. For that reason, the influence of philosophical experiences is better understood by comparing them to another kind of event. Upon reading or listening to other people telling the story of their lives, one may be surprised by the inclusion of some events, which seem to be given a prominence out of propor-

tion to their normal influence. In between death, marriage, glorious success and great failure, one sometimes gets what seem to be quite ordinary events: walking the dog, watching a movie, visiting grandparents and so forth. What can make this kind of event deserve a leading role in life-stories? There are many reasons, of course, depending on the particular context, but quite often it is that they somehow *symbolize* a turn in one's life. An ordinary event becomes transfigured into a fateful moment: "Things would never be the same again."

Philosophical experiences can sometimes achieve such a symbolic function, becoming emblematic for a new way of seeing, feeling, thinking, and perhaps even acting. In this way they can be one of the powers that structure human time, heralding the dawning of a new era and thereby ordering one's life in separate epochs. Typical of a philosophical experience in adolescence, is that it is interpreted as the threshold that divides childhood from adulthood. This was what happened to Briony when she watched the strange events by the fountain: "…she had privileged access across the years to adult behaviour, to rites and conventions she knew nothing about, as yet.… This was not a fairy tale, this was the real, the adult world."[18] Sometimes, as in Briony's case, we are conscious at the time of the experience that we are crossing a border. At other times, though, it is only understood in hindsight; as W.H. Auden put it, "…what had seemed an unimportant brook was, in fact, a Rubicon."[19]

An almost archetypical philosophical experience in childhood is the discovery of "the problem of other minds." It may proceed like this: an eleven-year-old boy learns that his best friend has told the other boys a secret he had promised not to reveal. Perhaps some children will react to such a disappointment by getting angry, and then forgetting it. This boy, however, experiences the betrayal as an exposure of people's dishonesty and unpredictability: No one can be trusted. From then on he never reveals personal matters to anyone, and treats everybody with suspicion. The apparently innocent experience of being deceived has shocked him into a pessimistic view of human nature: what they say and show, is never reliable evidence for how they actually think and feel—they can always be doubted. Whether this event was the real cause of his later doubt or not, it can nevertheless become a symbol of his new attitude towards others.

Many are familiar with this kind of experience, usually from childhood, although it is unusual that it colours one's life as a whole. In our everyday dealings with other people, trust is the rule, and doubt the exception. What is peculiar about the professed insights of philosophical experiences, though, is their universality: We can *never* know what others think and feel. Although this universality seems to be completely out of proportion to how we actually and ordinarily behave, it may still seem to be the awful truth in the aftermath of such an experience. In the midst of the experience, and as long as it is fresh and alive, we seem to reveal what is concealed in ordinary life, namely the unknowabil-

ity of other people. After a while, though, we slide back into everyday life, and now the professed "revelation" seems at best irrelevant, just a figment of the brain. Yet a certain uncertainty may remain in the back of the mind.

Sometimes a philosophical experience can be unstable and yet emblematic. This is nowhere more apparent than in the case of the awareness of death. Our first philosophical experience is often the death of someone close, perhaps a grandparent. Such an event may be the first message to the child that her world is vulnerable and that even her parents will some day disappear and never return. This first encounter with death and transience is often the first step out of innocent childhood and towards the adult's painful knowledge that all things must come to an end. But even though such an experience may influence the child permanently, it cannot stay alive in all its painful intensity—to live on, it is necessary to forget or suppress it. Sooner or later, although for an unfortunate few it never happens, we slide back into ordinary life, where such things are only relevant to someone else. The knowledge, of course, does not go away: we still *know* what faces everyone at the end; but we don't normally *feel* it, as Briony would have put it. Someone who has just experienced the death of a family member often feels that other people do not understand: "They *say* it's terrible that people have to die, but as long as they are out of danger, they don't *really* know the meaning of what they say." Children are, I think, just as sensitive to such distinctions as adults.

The Child's Point of View?

At this point I will no longer suppress an objection that may have seemed pertinent for some time: is it not recollections rather than childhood experiences I have been talking about? Furthermore, are not all such recollections really projections from the adult world into childhood? It may seem like a blatant anachronism to say that the content of childhood experiences are captured by words like "the transience of life," because children simply do not use such words. Perhaps the child's experience is completely different from what we adults are prone to think. From such considerations some would draw the conclusion that it is impossible to understand experiences from the child's point of view, and that the theme of this essay is more accurately an adult's picture of childhood rather than childhood itself.

This kind of argument is familiar, yet flawed. It rests on an objectivism with regard to understanding, which is often associated with Wilhelm Dilthey's positivist version of historicism. This objectivism thinks of the understanding of a cultural object as a reconstruction of the objectively given meaning that the object had for its creator. Since this demand is difficult to satisfy, this objectivism easily turns into a version of subjectivism or scepticism: We can never understand the meaning experiences have for the child (or for a former culture); our interpretations of them only tell us something about ourselves.

The philosophical issues that this argument involves are far too complex to allow for superficial treatment and simple solutions. Nonetheless, I would claim that my essay is about childhood itself: it treats *both* childhood and our conceptions of it. It is true that a child would not use words like "the transience of life" to express her encounter with death. The child may not express her experience in words at all; perhaps she expresses it through anger or by wetting herself at night. Nevertheless, that does not rule out the possibility that the adult woman's description of her experience as a girl *captures precisely what she felt as a child*. The meaning and importance of some experiences may be better understood in hindsight. In other words, there is a distinct possibility that the content of a childhood experience is more truly described from an adult point of view, that is, by an adult *capable* of doing it, perhaps a writer, like Proust. I am not able to argue for this view at present, but the possibility of this being the case at least shows some of the complexities in these issues.

Now it is true that I have not made childhood or anything "childlike" a part of the *concept* of philosophical experience. Consequently, such experiences are not necessarily restricted to childhood. There is no reason why such moments of revelation should not occur to adults. Yet there are reasons to believe that such experiences are more frequent in childhood, although, once again, the readers must decide for themselves whether this is true. Perhaps most of us, even philosophers, have stopped developing philosophically when we reach adulthood; perhaps our deepest views and convictions are already entrenched by that time, and seldom changed afterwards; for that reason, perhaps adults are not open to experiences that put their hard-fought identity at risk, as though our philosophical sensibility is finalized in early adulthood, and has lost the plasticity that characterizes it in childhood. Yet this sensibility may be "softened" again in the face of serious events in life, for instance untimely deaths. Such events may force one to reconsider the philosophical assumptions that one has based one's life upon, a possibility that illustrates the destructive as well as the constructive side of philosophical experiences.[20]

Notes

[1] Some may feel that these are religious matters rather than strictly philosophical. Yet in my view, such a "strict" interpretation of philosophy distorts the existential importance of it: In dealing with fundamentals, philosophy shares some of its questions with religion, though they try to answer them in different *ways*.

[2] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen/ Philosophical Investigations*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953). For an interpretation of this concept of grammar see: Cora Diamond, "Rules: Looking in the right place", in D.Z. Phillips and P. Winch, ed., *Attention to particulars,* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), pp. 12-34.

[3] I am not able to discuss the meaning of "philosophical" within the confines of this essay; I must simply presuppose an understanding of which questions and themes that are philosophical. Therefore, "in philosophical terms" means, "terms related to the characteristic ques-

tions and themes found in philosophy."

[4] This is sometimes called a "phenomenologically objective property," which, if it just means "is subjective, but seems objective," simply begs the question. Instead of deciding what its status is, I think one should rather describe how and why one is inclined to say, "In one sense it is subjective, in another it is objective."

[5] In this essay, "(philosophical) experience" refers to the whole process, including *both* the object of the experience (seen under a particular aspect) and the professed insight of the experience (expressed in words). "Object" is shorthand for "the object of the experience seen under a particular aspect," although I will occasionally use "situation" to emphasize that the object involved is always the object as seen in a particular situation or context. "Insight" serves as shorthand for the expression of the experience, that is, what one gets out of the experience, what one feels that the experience shows. Furthermore, remember that the "object" of the experience does not have to be a middle-sized *thing*, but can also be an event, a gesture, a melody, a situation as a whole, and so forth.

[6] This and the following quotes are from Ian McEwan, *Atonement*, (London: Vintage / Random House, 2002).

[7] The reason behind her sister's seemingly strange behaviour is simply that she has lost a valuable vase in the water, but Briony does not know anything about that.

[8] This and the following Proust-quotes are in Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, I-II, transl. by C.K.S. Moncrieff and F.A. Blossom, (New York: Random House, 1934), pp. 138-140 (vol. I).

[9] The borderline between "present" and "lost" is rather vague, and varies from case to case. One may, for instance, speculate on whether the "fullness" of the insight can only be preserved by "mémoire involuntaire," and never by "inculcation" – we cannot *make* it stay alive.

[10] I cannot go deeply into what characterizes a philosophical "theory," "thesis" or "position," but some features will be clear from the way I describe philosophical experiences.

[11] Perhaps this should be modified by "or being able to imagine how it would be to experience it." I have to leave this question open. In any case, it would be a feat of imagination that seems to presuppose an affinity in philosophical sensibility. For that reason, it would not undermine the main thrust of my argument.

[12] This is not as peculiar as it may seem. We are familiar with similar internal relations in the field of aesthetics. For that reason, one could say that philosophical experiences amount to the aesthetic dimension of philosophy.

[13] Remember that the very same words may be used both as the expression of an experience and as a description of a theory. To be precise, then, we should say: To understand the expression of a philosophical experience *as an expression of a philosophical experience*, you must have had the experience yourself.

[14] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen/ Philosophical Investigations*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953), pp. 215-216

[15] Ludwig Wittgenstein, "A Lecture on Ethics," in James C. Klagge and Alfred Nordmann, eds., *Ludwig Wittgenstein. Philosophical Occasions, 1912-1951* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), pp. 36-44.

[16] Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?*, (New York: Schribner, 1969), pp. 169-171.

[17] To get the feature of intensity in focus I have concentrated on cases where the philosophical experience is an intensification of already existing knowledge; but the power or intensity of the philosophical experience is present also where the experience introduces an altogether *new* content.

[18] Ian McEwan, *Atonement*, (London: Vintage, 2002), pp. 39-40.

[19] Quoted from Irwin D. Yalom, *Existential Psychotherapy* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), p. 298.

[20] I would like to thank Espen Eide, Reidar Pedersen and Arlyne Moi for comments.

Children: Animals or Persons?

CLAIRE CASSIDY

There is a great deal written about children in educational, psychological and sociological terms, but very little has been written about the concept of 'child' from a philosophical perspective. The aim of this inquiry is to come to some acceptable definition of the concept 'child'; I want to determine what exactly *is* a child.

Under Article 1 of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is defined as "… every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier."[1] There are some fundamental problems with this definition. The Convention shies away from such contentious issues as abortion, so we can't make assumptions about just when one *becomes* a child. Equally, if we consider the phrase 'unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier' things are left similarly vague since certain nations or societies may conceivably have an 'age of majority' earlier than eighteen, and likewise, there is even less scope for an individual to be a child beyond the age of eighteen. I choose my words carefully because I don't consider the concept or notion of *childhood* as being problematic or of primary importance. For me, childhood is that period of time when one is considered a child and it is *this* which must be determined. Gareth Matthews raises the issue that prompted my initial interest; he says that, "… the concept of childhood is philosophically problematic in that genuinely philosophical difficulties stand in the way of saying just what *kind* of difference the difference between children and adult human beings is."[2]

The philosopher Chryssipus (c.280 – 207 B.C.E.) suggested that "Humans have the same sensuous impulses (*hormetikai phantasiai)* as animals [however] they are not forced to act upon them."[3] Certainly human beings want to eat, sleep, procreate and even fight. These impulses or desires can't be denied the human animal any more than they be denied a lion, dog, mouse or hippopotamus. However, as Chryssipus says, we are not forced to act upon these impulses. There is something which separates us, as human beings, from the animals, from pursuing our animal urges; there is something additional within our make up that enables us to function on a level different to the hippo, mouse, dog or lion. One might suggest that what distinguishes me from the hippo is the manner in which I interact with other individuals. Like the hippo I am a social animal, but one that does not always act on impulse in my relations with others. J.A. Perkins suggests that "… it is only because other people react to a person as an object that that person learns to think of himself as such."[4] I would take this further and posit that a person learns to think of him/herself as a *person* when others react to him/her as such. It appears we are more than human animals, we are also persons. The term 'person' is not synonymous with other terms often used interchangeably such as human being, individual, self, I, and so on; it is an additional part of being within a human context.

Persons are human beings. This statement does not necessarily hold in reverse – human beings may not always be persons. So, what then does it mean to treat someone as a person? 'Person' is perceived of as a positive attribute, we all want to be seen as persons and treated as such – it is an evaluative term with a notion of value embedded or implicit within it. Therefore, in treating another individual as a person we are, in some sense, valuing them. Kant emphasises that in order to treat someone as a person one should behave towards him/her as an end in him/herself. He holds that "Persons, therefore, are not merely subjective ends whose existence as an object of our actions has a value *for us*: they are *objective ends* – that is, things whose existence is in itself an end, and indeed an end such that in its place we can put no other end to which they should serve *simply* as means."[5] His 'practical imperative' expresses this more succinctly; "Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end."[6]

It may be suggested that the first time or place when one experiences being treated as a person is within the family. There is a problem here, however. Certainly one would hope that the child or infant is being valued as an end in itself, yet one may wonder whether the infant is being treated 'as a person' in order to generate some desired out-

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come, in order that they become an individual who will play an appropriate part in society – whatever 'appropriate' means in such a context. If we consider the reasons people give for having children we must question whether the child is, in fact, being treated as an end in itself and not as a means to an end; for instance, the child may be conceived in order to make the family 'complete', to give either one of the partners a 'purpose', as an expression or symbol of the partners' love for one another, to carry on the family line or to provide tissue or cells to aid the survival of another sibling. In all of these examples the newborn is not seen as an end in itself, but as a means to an end. However, the child may not be so innocent itself.

Consciously or not, the baby is not treating others as persons if that means treating them as ends rather than as a means to an end; he/she is using the individuals around him/herself to learn how to interact and behave in the world. He/she needs others in order to function in that society. In fact, all babies and the majority of young individuals rely solely on their older counterparts to provide for them in terms of food, clothing, shelter, guidance, and so on. Yet, is the child in this scenario different from any other individual in society? No. Like the baby, other individuals use one another as a gauge of behavior or as a guide for participating in society or to learn from, it is merely the case that those we know of as children need a starting point because they have less experience of living in the physical world, that they perhaps take more from others in terms of needing to be socialized. Additionally, humans are social in nature, their communities and societies are based on the need for others and others are needed not just for the sake of being, they are needed because of what they can do or provide for us as individuals or for the larger social group – they are in many ways, a means to an end, our end. However, this does not take away from the fact that they are valued in some sense – even if it is for what they will contribute to our society. Similarly, it may be argued that children are valued for what they will *become*, although this fails to meet the criteria of valuing them as they are *now* for what they are *now*. In the positive and valuing ways parents behave towards their off-spring one might suggest that they are treating them as persons. The parents take care of the child's needs; the child is fed, clothed, given protection, given language and communication skills, provided with social skills and some form of education. However, again this seems to be more concerned with the child in terms of its future adult life – what it will *become*.

Perhaps we need to consider the problem the other way round; it may be the case that it is in *treating* others as valuable individuals that makes one a person; in order to be a person one must treat others in a positive and valued way. So, it is not so much that one is being treated as a person that makes one a person, but that in behaving towards someone else as a person one becomes or maintains a personhood. It is relatively simple to behave towards others in

society – whatever their age – in a positive way, in a way which demonstrates some value for their being, but there are instances where this may not be a simple situation. If we consider individuals who have broken the laws of a particular society and they have been punished by being put in prison, do we consider such individuals as persons? While such an individual may not have treated others as persons by valuing and respecting them and in using them for his/her own personal gains and as a means to his/her end, then one might suggest that such individuals lose their personhood. However, society – especially those personally responsible for the running of our prisons and other penal institutions – are *bound* to treat the inmates as persons. Like the child in the family, the inmate must be fed, watered, clothed and given shelter. They must be valued as individuals, not to make *them* persons, but in order that the caregivers may maintain their personhood. There is a sense of obligation or duty implied here on the part of the provider. The same may be true for children; the parents – or carers – are persons so long as they are treating the child in a positive and valued manner, but the child does not become a person because he/she is treated as such.

We should perhaps note the linguistic use of treating an individual *as* a person. There is an assumption that the individual is a person and we relate to him/her as though that were the case, but until there is evidence that he/she can treat or behave towards other individuals as though they are persons, then personhood is denied or in some sense held in reserve. One may be a person *nominally* by being treated *as* a person without having demonstrated one's personhood in one's treatment of others. This is certainly an attribute animals other than humans do not have. Animals do not behave towards others as though they were valuable in and of themselves; however, there are occasions when animals are treated as persons. The way in which we behave towards our pets suggests that we treat them as we would other individuals we value; we feed them, play with them, exercise them, talk to them and worry about their welfare – we behave towards them as though our behavior will be, or could be, reciprocated. This is the same in our approach to children.

The word 'person' comes from the *dramatis personae* of the stage. The donning of a mask, literally *per sonae*, that through which sound comes which is then linked with the many roles the actor performs. Similarly, this notion of the *dramatis personae* places us firmly on the social stage which involves us in 'playing our part'; we adopt the role and thus function in society amongst others who are equally utilizing their roles to participate. So, can we take personhood to be a role?

Certainly it is something in addition to being a human animal. Alasdair MacIntyre holds that it is only when one is thought of apart from one's roles that one ceases to be a functional concept; he says that in the classical tradition "… to be a man is to fill a set of roles each of which has its own point and purpose: member of a family, citizen, soldier, phi-

losopher, servant of God."[7] I would suggest that 'person' is a role like those listed above, that it is a functional concept. Some may suggest that person cannot be a role since it cannot be chosen, however, there are certain roles that one has which cannot be chosen, for instance, I cannot choose to be a sister, I cannot choose to be a daughter; if I have a child I become a mother. So, although I cannot *choose* to be a person and am assigned the role, I will learn the expected part and accompanying behaviours.

I'd like to suggest that the notion of person is an attribute, it is a given role, and it is given at birth. This is not the only role we are given at birth; I would also like to suggest that 'child' is a role concept that we are expected to adopt. This first role is one where the individual is innocent and lacking in power – it is important that in this role one behaves in such a way that this innocence is preserved. Part of the role of child is to learn the behaviour of the society into which one has been placed. Certainly society's younger members have their daily lives shaped and controlled for them; there is compulsory schooling, restrictions on their social space and their sexual activities, entertainment is regulated and food and clothing is provided by others. It may be seen that the role of child, or the purpose of this role is one of preparation, one where this period of time is used for grooming and training for the child's future life, his/her life as an adult; again we meet the child as a means to an end.

During the time when one is adopting, or acting out one's role as a child, there are certain props to be used – toys. Toys, according to R. Barthes, "… *literally* prefigure the world of adult functions."[8] Children are given the opportunity, with toys, to practise for their future adult role, and – more especially – the role of person as they must interact and relate to the other individuals within the scene. Using the tools of play the child can adopt the role of person in the way he/she behaves towards others – real or imagined – in the play. We may want to argue that in everything we do we are acting in role, but, whatever the role, it must take place in a social context, and if we are expected to maintain the role of person in this social context – for who would want to rid oneself of it deliberately – then the notion is bound up with how we treat others – and so, it is a moral concept.

There is not space or time enough here to unpack the truly moral nature of the concept of person, but it may be enough to say that if we adopt Kant's earlier definition of personhood, as one where we treat others as ends rather than as means, then the way in which we conduct ourselves within society will be evidenced by this. It is to this notion of society we must now turn.

Part of the our role as person is to be part of a society, but we have already seen that this is no different from other social animals, but where the difference perhaps lies is in how we *participate* in that society. We are expected to conform to some moral code, the moral code of our particular society. This moral code is established as the majority

moral code which comes into force through our electoral system. In suggesting that there is a moral code that we all adhere to, I would not like to give the impression that we all have the same moral code – we do not always all agree on what is right or wrong, good or bad. In fact, it is this very disagreement which is healthy for our society. J.S. Mill maintains that "If all mankind minus one were of one opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind."[9] It is essential if society is to develop into something deeper, something more than a collection of human animals living together for mutual gains that the individuals come together to work for a common good – the good that they work towards may be that of community. Very often when we talk about belonging to a society we talk in terms of being a *citizen*. The notion of citizenship is a reciprocal idea; we are obliged to participate in our society if we wish to be perceived of as a citizen – and one cannot participate through inaction.

In ancient Athens the *polis* was prior to and constitutive of the individual. The idea of participation in decision making in ancient Athens was so important that payments were made to allow poorer members of the *polis* to take part – poorer males, female members of society did not have any say. It is this decision-making process and our involvement in it which is key to generating community. At present the government's idea of citizenship appears to be one closely related to that employed by the Roman Empire; one of social control. What I'd like to suggest is that for citizenship to actually work individual members must contribute to the decision-making process and this happens best through dialogue and discussion; there is very limited participation in voting at election time. We should be promoting a more active political citizenry – political in the sense that those members of the society or community are active and take an interest in their community and the needs of those belonging to it, but political also in the sense that one will use one's moral code for the betterment of all. If we wish our society to be a democracy and we wish those citizens in our democracy to be truly effective, then I would maintain that they need to be able to think critically, weigh alternatives, evaluate reasons given for particular policies; in other words, they should have the disposition to reason and the skills required for this effective reasoning.

By virtue of the fact that we are human beings we have the capacity to reason, but in order to be proficient requires practice. It is important that one does not merely assert opinions and views, but that these opinions should be challenged or questioned, we should consider the assumptions we and others make and challenge them. Catherine McCall clearly states the prerequisite for being a reasoning, reflective and effective citizen. She says, "… a person needs to be able to make reasoned judgements concerning the views of others, and needs to be able to modify his or her view if necessary. This requires comprehension skills, which in turn requires skill in analogical reasoning as well as in rec-

ognising and evaluating analogies; identifying assumptions; recognising fallacies; being careful about jumping to conclusions; recognising part/whole relationships; always being aware of alternatives; seeking out consistencies and inconsistencies in every sphere of life."[10] How can we ensure that our citizens have these qualities and abilities?

McCall has devised a practice called Community of Philosophical Inquiry which grew out of her work on the Philosophy for Children (P4C) programme in America; however, its roots are firmly placed in Scotland's eighteenth century philosophy clubs. C.O.P.I. is a *practical* philosophy. Ideally groups of between eight and fifteen meet on a regular basis with a trained facilitator who will create the conditions for Philosophical Inquiry (PI). There is a set structure for an inquiry and this structure remains the same no matter the age of the participants or the experience the group or the individuals within the group have. Very briefly, a passage is read around the group and the facilitator would then ask for questions either about the text or something that arose from the text. The facilitator selects the question the group will inquire into. The question is thrown back to its originator whereby they will say something about what they find puzzling about the question or some initial thoughts regarding the problem. Thereafter, should anyone wish to contribute to the dialogue they must raise their hand, wait to be called and then offer an agreement or disagreement with something that has gone before. Not only must they agree or disagree, they must provide *reasons* for this agreement or disagreement. At no point is there a vote, a search for consensus or conclusions. In fact, the egalitarian nature of the COPI. is such that no technical language or jargon is permitted, neither are references to authorities or sources and participants do not have to offer their own personally held beliefs. The facilitator, in his/her role, aims to juxtapose different philosophical perspectives and assumptions in order that the dialogue will develop. I would like to suggest this as a useful method for involving citizens in the running of their society. Certainly there have been pilot projects of citizens' juries where focus groups meet to discuss issues; I would take this the step further and would propose that the model of the COPI be used like that of the citizens' jury. There is a fundamental difference between the two – citizens' juries are made up of adults while communities of philosophical inquiry may be composed of children. As yet there has been no work where children and adults participate in the group, but it would be an interesting experiment.

If we return to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child we can see that Article 10 suggests that children should be allowed to express their views and opinions freely and without external influence. While this is to be commended, and PI would promote the skills useful to such an endeavour, it is not enough that children be given a voice, that their views or opinions are heard. We must also be careful that the voice of children is not translated and interpreted by the adult speaker. Children certainly should

be given space for their voices – for they do not all speak with one voice – to be heard, but the voices they have should have some impact on the hearers. Children should be empowered in some sense in order that they may participate in society; in order that they may challenge assumptions and structures that affect their lives. We should be providing the tools that encourage and promote this kind of critical participation; children should be helped *to* think rather than be told what to think or how to think. Adults are no more adept reasoners than children. Rousseau makes the point that "If we do not form the habit of thinking as children, we shall lose the power of thinking for the rest of our life."[11] We need to exercise our mental powers like our muscular ones – they improve only by being used.

So, in conclusion, we – adults and children – are human beings, we are animals. Some of us are also persons in that we treat others as ends in themselves and not merely as a means, but this attribution may not be saved merely for the adult population, although it may be seen that children, unless empowered and given more of a participatory role on a more equal footing, cannot be persons as they are only ever treated in terms of their *becoming* and never as an end in themselves. If children were enfranchised members of society, they too could be active, political, critical and effective citizens working for the benefit of all in generating a community. One of the ways this may be promoted is through the use of community of philosophical inquiry as a tool for dialogue on a deep and reflective level. It is within COPI that children are treated as persons. It is in COPI that they are conceived of as reasoning individuals. And it is in COPI that we move towards a more egalitarian notion of individuals rather than perpetrating the divide of adult and child; or indeed, animal and person.

Notes

[1] Newell P. *The U.N. convention and children's rights in the UK*. London: National Children's Bureau; 1991.

[2] Matthews GB. *The philosophy of childhood*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press; 1994.

[3] Taylor C. *Sources of the self: the making of the modern identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 1989.

[4] Perkins JA. *The concept of the self in the French enlightenment*. Geneva: Libraire Droz; 1969.

[5] Kant I. *Groundwork of the metaphysics of morals*. London: Unwin Hyman Limited; 1989.

[6] Ibid.

[7] MacIntyre A. *After virtue*. London: Gerald Duckworth and Company Limited; 1999.

[8] Barthes R. *Toys* from *Mythologies*. In: Jenks C, editor. *The sociology of childhood: essential readings*. London: Batsford Academic and Educational Limited; 1982.

[9] Mill JS. *On liberty*. London: Penguin; 1985.

[10] McCall C. *Stevenson lectures on citizenship*. Glasgow: Glasgow University Press; 1993.

[11] Rousseau J-J. *Emile or education*. London: J.M. Dent and Sons Limited; 1948.

Philosophical Dialogue and the Search for Truth

KAREL L. VAN DER LEEUW

Introduction

Socratic discussion is a form of philosophical dialogue and its popularity is one of the signs of a returning interest in philosophical dialogue or discussion.[1] Reviving interest in philosophical dialogue, that is to say in tackling philosophical questions by means of discussion, is, however, not restricted to the Socratic method. There are more signs that we are entering a dialogical period again. The practice of philosophy for children—originating in the pioneer work of Matthew Lipman—and philosophical counseling, both forms of philosophical dialogue, are spreading too.

Academic philosophy is nowadays mainly published in treatise form, in imitation of a scientific tradition and under the pressure of the exigencies of journals. Nevertheless, several interesting pieces of philosophical thinking have been published in dialogue form even in our time, or have clearly been influenced by the dialogue form.[2]

In this paper I will first reflect on the significance of dialogue in the history of philosophy and I will argue that the present Socratic tradition is no exceptional deviation from the main course of philosophical thought, but constitutive of at least one aspect of it. I will take my examples from the European, but also from the Chinese tradition because I am familiar with the latter, and I will largely neglect the Indian tradition because I know very little about it. I will then turn to the intrinsic relation between dialogue and the conception of philosophy, concentrating especially on Socratic dialogue and its relation to truth, and show that adoption of the Socratic method as constitutive for our conception of philosophy implies a particular view on the relation between thought and reality. Finally, I will try to delineate what philosophical dialogue is about, and what kind of truth it tries to find out.

Dialogue in the History of Philosophy

Written dialogue is a persistent literary form in the his-

tory of philosophy, often, but not always, as a reflection of an existing tradition of actual philosophical dialogue. By 'philosophical dialogue' in this paper is meant the practice of philosophy by means of oral communication and the written reports of such conversations. In its literary form dialogue usually takes place between two persons, but dialogues between more than two people can easily be found, e.g. in Plato's works.

Oral dialogues can have various aims: their function can be instruction, but dialogue can also be a means of deciding between two opposite views, of tackling a particular problem in co-operation with others, of exchanging views, of persuading others, or of reaching a decision. That is to say, dialogue can be instruction, discussion, formal debate, conversational exploration, etc. Philosophical dialogue aims—in contrast to dialogue in general—at reaching some common insight, that is to say its function is a cognitive one. This insight may of course at the start be hidden from all the participants—in which case the dialogue takes the form of a search—or one of the participants may have this insight from the beginning, in which case we have to do with instruction or persuasion.

The form and function of philosophical dialogue change in the course of the history of philosophy. One of the reasons for the development of philosophical dialogue is the changing relation between the dialogue as a literary form and actual dialogical practice. I will not always draw a sharp boundary between the two.

In the broad sense of dialogue defined above, a minor but important part of philosophical literature is written in dialogue form. Examples from antiquity are the dialogues of Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, the Indian *Upanishads*,

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the *Analects* of Confucius and the *Mencius* or *Mengzi*. All these works have the form of conversations between people, and dialogical parts or traces of dialogue can frequently be found in other philosophical works. Even after antiquity the dialogue has remained a persistent literary form: a number of classics of philosophy have been written in dialogue form or show clear traces of a dialogical tradition. Other popular genres are closely related to the dialogical tradition: philosophical letters, addresses, and the *monologue intérieur*. Some of the dialogues of Antiquity—in the East as well as in the West—are among the most widely read and commented upon classics in philosophy.

The written dialogue does, of course, not always represent an oral discussion. The popularity of authors like Plato certainly induced later philosophers, like Cicero, to present their philosophical deliberations in dialogical form. On the other hand, there may have been frequent discussions in a period which preferred the treatise form in its publications. The relations between literary form and oral tradition may shed additional light on the conception of philosophy in a particular period. We have, however, to leave this intriguing point aside in this paper.

In early antiquity written dialogue certainly reflected real conversations, and there is an easy explanation for that fact. In ancient Greece as well as in ancient China there was an intrinsic link between the origin of philosophical thinking and the beginnings of formal education, which had the function of preparing disciples for public and political life. A teacher or 'master' had a number of disciples and instruction took place orally, if only for the simple reason that there existed few written texts. Some of the oldest philosophical dialogues—like the *Analects*[3] of Confucius—simply reflect that instructional practice, and have been written down by disciples who naturally wanted to preserve the words of the master as purely as possible. Even in these cases there is, of course, some discussion about the relation of the written records to the actual dialogues as they have taken place.[4]

There may be various reasons for writing down philosophical opinions in dialogue form, that is, to choose the dialogue as the literary form of a philosophical exposition. Because of its theatrical effect the dialogue is an attractive form of publication for the reader: it represents argument and counter argument in a lively manner and it shows something of the characters involved—which is particularly interesting when they are historical personalities also otherwise known. So one reason for the persistence of the dialogue in the history of philosophy may be literary fashion. But the dialogue form can also be chosen to pretend that the reader has to do with the 'real words of the master'. Doubts may be dispersed in the reader's mind if he receives the words of the master himself.

The dialogue form can be attractive for the author too, because it disguises his real opinions and merely presents arguments. Caution may have been a motive for Hume in his *Dialogues on Natural Religion* and for Maurice Joly in

his *Dialogues aux enfers entre Macchiavelli et Montesquieu*, in which he criticises the politics of Napoleon III. These considerations, however, are valid for science too, witness Galilei's *Dialoghi sopra i due sistemi del mondo*. Nevertheless, in the history of science the dialogue was quickly replaced by the treatise form, and no serious scientist would consider publishing his findings in dialogue form.

In the history of philosophy, dialogues were succeeded by works published in treatise form. A transition is formed by dialogues like Plato's *Republic*, the greater part of which consists of long expositions by Socrates under a thin guise of dialogue because they are regularly interrupted by questions. Even worse is the second important preserved work of Chinese philosophy, the *Mozi*,[5] which for the greater part consists of a number of thematical treatises introduced by the formula 'Master Mozi said', which does not much more than legitimize what follows. The next stage are the works of Aristotle in Greece and of Xunzi in China, collections of thematic treatises without any reference to a speaker.

This development does not mean, however, that dialogue in philosophy died an early death. In the Greco-Roman world it returned in the dialogues of Cicero, and in Chinese antiquity in the conversations of Mencius[6] and in the often imaginary, but very funny dialogues of Zhuangzi.[7] Cicero may have been using the dialogue merely as a convenient literary form, but there can be no doubt that some of the dialogues in the *Mencius*[8] and the dialogues between Zhuangzi and Hui Shi in the *Zhuangzi* reflect a real debating practice, even if they are not transcripts of discussions which have really taken place in exactly that form.

In the course of the history of philosophy dialogue returns regularly, as a practice as well as a literary form. Public discussions and interrogations were an major part of academic life in late mediaeval philosophy. Dialogue as a literary form returned with the Renaissance, doubtless in imitation of the philosophy of antiquity, but certainly reflecting an existing practice too.[9] In Chinese philosophy dialogue returned during the third century AD. in the form of the so-called 'pure conversations'. The intention of the participants here was entirely different from that in antiquity: in a common enterprise, they tried to formulate some point as concisely and elegantly as possible. These conversations are like little theatrical sketches performed with the intention of being written down and published.[10]

This last example shows that some periods or fashions put rigorous literary restrictions on the form of philosophical dialogue. Quite other kinds of restrictions are formed by specific conventions of debate in certain periods of the history of philosophy, especially in the so-called 'eristic debates'. One form of eristic debate is specifically mentioned by Socrates in Plato's *Gorgias* in his discussion with Gorgias' pupil Polos: the two opponents alternatively formulate a question and the other has to give a short answer. Sophisms like the 'Horned' betray another convention, in which a challenger poses questions and a defendant has to answer

with 'yes' or 'no'. A very similar form is found in the famous *Discourse on the White Horse* by Gongsun Longzi[11] in ancient China, where obviously a defendant has to come up with a thesis and subsequently has to answer questions brought forward by a challenger. The same example shows that these sophistic discussions were not always an empty play on words, but often concerned serious philosophical problems.

Periods of dialogue alternate in the history of philosophy with periods in which the treatise was the almost exclusive literary form. In European history periods in which the dialogue form took an important place were the fourth century BC. in Greek thought, the Italian Renaissance, and the eighteenth century Enlightenment (Berkeley, Hume, Diderot). Very broadly speaking we can say that there are periods in the history of philosophy in which there is a dominant philosophical outlook (e.g. Cartesian philosophy, German Idealism) and in which the practice of philosophy is seen as adding to an existing body of philosophical knowledge or insight; and periods in which everything in philosophy is in movement, in which philosophy is in an identity crisis, and when even the boundaries of the discipline are unclear to its practitioners. It is in these last mentioned periods that we find more instances of philosophical dialogue. Science, on the contrary, always sees itself as the accumulation of knowledge and therefore dialogue has no real place in scientific literature—which is not to say, of course, that discussion between opposing views has no place in scientific practice. We will now take a closer look at what implications acknowledging the importance of dialogue for philosophy has for our conception of the discipline.

Implications of Dialogical Philosophy

Granting central importance to dialogue as a vehicle of philosophical thinking excludes a scientistic view of the nature of philosophy. The analogy with science is very strong in certain phases of the development of philosophy. Aristotle's work shows no clear boundary between philosophy and science, but in doing so was a model for philosophy. Attempts to put philosophy on a rigorous scientific basis were undertaken by Descartes, by Kant, and by Husserl, among others. Clearly all those philosophers saw their work as a foundation for future generations of philosophers. Doing philosophy is thus a building activity in which later generations add to what has been achieved by former generations.

Science and scientific philosophy are not only accumulating bodies of knowledge—this knowledge has to be seen as unhistorical to be capable of being accepted by later generations. Science is unhistorical in the sense that it does not matter when and by whom a certain insight is gained, only if it can be proven or validated. Even the method of validation is usually seen as irrelevant to the meaning of the resulting insight and concerns only the degree of certainty. Of

course this view of the development of scientific thought has not remained undisputed in recent decades, but attempts to put philosophy on a fixed scientific basis have never been successful for more than a short time.

When dialogue is prevalent, insight is closely tied to the situation in which the insight is gained. This does not mean the insight is true only for those who gained it, or for the time in which it was gained, but it means that the activity of doing philosophy is more important than the results, at least in the sense that having philosophical insight without having made the effort to gain that insight is of little value. Thus there is a clear distinction between philosophy and scientific activity: we cannot leave philosophy to the expert who has gained the insights and simply imparts them to us. We will see later that this distinction between philosophical insight and expert knowledge is basic and not accidental.

At the same time there remains a similarity between philosophy and science if we accept discussion as a means to finding some solution to philosophical problems. In dialogue the means we have are ideas, arguments, analyses of concepts, common experience. Deciding on philosophical issues or trying to find out about philosophical questions makes sense only if these means—the means of rational discussion—are sufficient to reach a conclusion. This means that philosophy is a rational activity, but one in which no special observation of reality is necessary. In this respect philosophy is close to, and has often been compared with, mathematics.

Philosophical Discussion

A theory of rational discourse would define the form of the discussion by drawing up constitutive rules for rational discussion.[12] We will leave this construction of an ideal type aside here, and instead concentrate on the issue of what the acceptance of rational discussion as a means for deciding philosophical questions implies for our view of philosophy. We will restrict ourselves to the specific form of philosophical dialogue which is known as the Socratic discussion. Socratic discussions start from philosophical questions,[13] and this fact has consequences for the form of the discussion, but also for its underlying conception of philosophy.

In the first place, the Socratic tradition implies more than an occasional talking about philosophy by interested people. In the tradition, it is understood that Socratic dialogue or discussion is an important, maybe even the only method to practice philosophy. If the communication is to be more than an exchange of views, adherence to discussion implies the conviction that philosophical questions can be settled by discussion and by discussion alone, and the acceptance of rational discourse as an ideal type for such a discussion implies the view that exploration and argumentation are the means to settle the question. Acceptance of the Socratic method thus implies a very specific view of the nature of philosophy, a view which will not be accepted by

every academic philosopher. To put it in a systematic way, this view implies the following points:

1. Practising philosophy is the attempt to answer philosophical questions, which—if necessary—can be further clarified or divided into sub questions during the discussion, that is to say philosophy is regarded as problem-oriented.

2. The answer to a philosophical question or solution of a philosophical problem is no individual creation, but has to be accepted by others, and in principle by all people capable of rational thought. That is, philosophical questions are decidable and answers to them are not simply a matter of fashion, spirit of the time, or individual temperament.

3. Acceptance of an answer to a philosophical question follows, if all the participants have been convinced by means of rational discourse, in which argumentation is the only means to establish a consensus.

This can be put in another way: the acceptance of the Socratic method excludes a doctrine of privileged access to philosophical truth or insight. By 'privileged access' I mean a special method or way, which has to mastered before philosophical insight becomes accessible—a way which requires some special training or even initiation, and which can possibly not be mastered by everyone, and in extreme cases cannot even be articulated. Such an 'esoteric' view mostly implies that philosophical insight has to be gained individually, not as a concerted enterprise. It is an irony of history that the two great masters of presentation of philosophical dialogue as it is described here, Plato and Mencius, were both defendants of a doctrine of privileged access, and would probably not have accepted discussion as the definite means to settle philosophical questions.

To clarify what rational discourse is not, we will have to see how a doctrine of privileged access arose, and what it means. A special method can be anything. If we believe Robert Eno,[14] in the case of the early Confucians it meant participation in the traditional ritual dances. What insight meant in the case of the Confucians and why it could only be reached in this particular way is less clear, but is of no concern here. Judging from what Confucius says in the *Analects* the insight gained cannot even be clearly articulated in a general way. I would call the Confucian doctrine one of moderate privilege: in principle anyone could join the community, but he had to go through the very special training to achieve insight on his own.

Plato's philosophy goes a step further. Philosophical insight is not only tied to specific training, but—if we take Plato's exposition in the *Republic* as his opinion—insight concerns a special level of reality, inaccessible not only to the uninitiated, but to the senses as well. Privileged access is necessary because reality is split into two levels, one of which is accessible to everybody, but the second, the focal point of real insight, only to those who have undergone a special training. It may be even inaccessible in principle to

most human beings, as the caste structure of the utopian society he proposes certainly suggests. In any case the way of insight has to be gone at individually, as the metaphor of the cave demonstrates.

If we accept this so-called 'metaphysical split' in reality, then special access becomes almost inevitable. Conversely, this means that acceptance of rational discourse implies the rejection of the metaphysical split in reality. It implies—to put it into other words—some kind of realism, in which our daily experience and knowledge of the world around us are relevant for philosophical insights. And—because of point 2) above—this world has to be a common world.

The Socratic method seen from this angle is the common attempt to find out about our common world. Find out what? Find out what can be found out by rational discourse only, without special means like a laboratory, specialized knowledge, intuition, mystical union, or whatever real or imagined means of knowing exist. Socratic method is the attempt to find out about the background of our common experience.

Nelson's Foundation of the Socratic Method

Rational discourse of course cannot add to our factual knowledge of the world of our experience—only observation can do that. So, what does philosophy add? Philosophical thinking can only clarify the conceptual framework of everyday experience.

The theoretical foundation for the Socratic method as it is now practiced was laid out by the German Neo-Kantian philosopher Leonard Nelson.[15] Nelson distinguished three kinds of knowledge:

– Scientific knowledge consisting of generalizations and gained by induction, starting from factual knowledge through observation
– Mathematical insight consisting of relations between abstract concepts and gained by the deductive method, starting with axiomatic relations between primitive concepts
– Philosophical insight consisting of the conceptual presuppositions of everyday experience and gained by regressive abstraction from those experiences.

Although mathematics and philosophy both consist of insights of reason (conceptual insights), the way philosophical insight is gained is in direct opposition to the way of mathematics. Mathematical truths are of an analytical nature, as are the truths of logic. Outside the domain of logic, however, philosophical truths are synthetic—they are discovered by means of reason solely, but they do not find their foundation in reason alone.[16] Nelson compares his conception of philosophical insight with the Platonic theory of anamnesis: philosophy does not produce any new truths, but consists in the discovery of truths already present in reason and underlying every experience. The aim of philosophy is gaining insight, not knowledge.

Philosophical truth, however, is of a particular kind. It is no object of knowledge, but of insight. One does not master it through learning, but through one's own thinking. Therefore one cannot learn philosophy, but only the art of doing philosophy… For this reason one cannot learn philosophy from the history of philosophy (my translation).[17]

Philosophy—although it produces no new knowledge—is concerned with truth. The philosophical truths belong to the structure of reason itself and so can be discovered by investigating the presuppositions of everyone's own experience, in principle by 'looking inward'. Philosophical truth is, so to say, already present:

> Progress in the history of philosophy consists solely in the development of methods by means of which the one and only philosophical truth, which lies in the mind of everyone and is more or less unclear, can increasingly be proven (my translation).[18]

How do we know if we have discovered the truth, considering the fact that philosophical truths are notoriously difficult to discover? We can never be certain that we did not deceive ourselves or miss getting to the bottom of the matter. Here the Socratic method comes in: if we can reach consensus in a discussion, in which all participants in cooperation try to find out the truth in the matter, than we can at least be reasonably certain that we are on the right track, even if the discovered insights remain open for later revision. Because philosophical inquiry is the discovery and rational foundation of the dimly perceived principles underlying the possibility of every experience, philosophical insight can only be gained in the concerted effort of those who have this experience, in principle all rational beings. A condition for this is not only consensus, but complete clarity regarding the involved conceptual relationships. Socratic discussion thus appears as more than the occasional cooperation between people interested in the same problem: it defines the essence of philosophical thinking.

Few people nowadays would completely accept Nelson's Kantian view on the nature of philosophical thinking as the search for truths embedded in reason as such. However, it is important to realize that the Socratic method makes sense only when doing philosophy is regarded as a common attempt to discover the foundations of our experience. It implies some form of realism and a view of philosophy as finding out about or understanding reality.

Philosophical Truth

To gain a clearer view of the implications of the dialogical endeavour, let us explore the notion of philosophical truth a bit further. What do we mean when we contend that

philosophical truth is somehow hidden in the recesses of our rational faculties? Can we mean that truth is somewhere there, ready to be discovered under a pile of falsities or ir-relevancies? And does the process of dialogical inquiry consist in simply comparing what we find in our minds, throwing away what differs and keeping as possible truth about reality what we find to have in common? Superficial notions about the relation between truth and consensus may suggest such a view, which we have, however, to reject en-ergetically.

Truth consists—as does falsity—of propositions or judgments about reality and judgments of propositions, which are of a linguistic nature.[19] There is some discussion about the question whether our mind contains ready-made propositions, but they certainly are not the content of the reasoning faculties as such. The rational faculty contains no judgments, but makes judgments. If the faculty of reasoning by its very existence implies the truth of certain judgments, this does not even imply that the corresponding truths are somehow represented in the mind. Truths *of* reason are no more truths in reason than are the miles covered by the driver the act of driving.

Despite Nelson's psychological turn in Kantianism, phi-losophical truth can only refer to insights which are not ana-lytical, but which are nevertheless reached on the basis of common reasoning. But not on the basis of reasoning alone. Philosophical insights concern the presuppositions of ex-perience. In the course of a Socratic inquiry we have to as-certain, not only if the principles discovered are common to us all, but also if they really are the principles of experi-ence. Because we cannot proceed by axiom in philosophy, the only way to do this is to start from experience and to look for general principles underlying experience.

This point of departure has important philosophical con-sequences too. It implies that philosophy is seen as the clarification of our daily experience and intuitions. Practic-ing philosophy in a Socratic discussion leaves our daily world intact as it is and does not try to convince us that the world is somehow completely different from our immediate understanding. It deepens our daily understanding, it does not supplant it.

The Socratic method as it is practiced by its adherents implies the conviction that consensus about the answer to philosophical questions is possible. Even if we avoid the term 'truth' for this consensus, it is clear that 'finding out about reality' comes very close to this. Practitioners of other types of philosophical discussion will possibly think this goes too far and prefer a divergent discussion, because they do not think consensus is possible in principle. The problem then is: why discuss at all? A clear justification for the Socratic method is the conviction that we can reach a common insight.

Daily Experience

In the foregoing we repeatedly spoke of 'daily experi-ence' as a level of reality accessible in principle to all who share the faculty of reasoning. Daily experience in a literal and concrete sense, however, is clearly very different for the university teacher, the philosophical practitioner, the factory worker, the salesman, the peasant, the consultant, the IT technician. There barely is any common experience on the basis of which we can develop common rational in-sights. Common experience only means that we live in a common world, meet each other, try to understand each other, live together, sometimes have common interests. But this common world is no more than the shell inside of which our very different lives are enacted.

Practicing philosophy is trying to understand how all these different lives fit together in a common reality; it is, in the phrase of Wilfred Sellars, to have the 'eye on the whole'.[20] "Philosophy in an important sense has no special subject matter which stands to it as other subject-matters stand to other special disciplines."[21] This implies a radical difference between philosophical insights and understand-ing in any other area of human thought:

> We expect from philosophy that it will give us rules to judge the facts of life, which we need to be able to act in a thoughtful way. Such a thoughtful attitude requires insight into the ultimate objectives and aims of human life. And it is just these objec-tives which philosophy has to teach us (my transla-tion).[22]

To be able to 'act thoughtfully' we have to discover the ulti-mate aims and objectives of human life, which obviously can be derived from the principles underlying our common experience—although Nelson is not very clear about this. Again we can ask: are those principles somewhere present in the common substance of our diverse worlds of experi-ence, like the grain in the wood, or the songlines in the Aus-tralian desert, ready to be discovered by the seeing eye or the listening ear? Can we regard these various worlds of experience as the diverse manifestations of one and the same underlying reality?

It is difficult to imagine that a common experience which is not experienced is nevertheless somewhere there. The reality of which philosophy promises to find out the truth is not a definite area of experience to be explored, but a common experience which still has to be constituted. The 'shell' into which our various areas of experience fit, is not an object lying around somewhere, but a task to be fulfilled. In this respect philosophical reasoning is something very different from the instrumental reasoning in specific areas of experience. The reality of which philosophical practice tries to find out the truth is not given.

May we at least expect that if we start from our diverse experiences and by rational dialogue try to establish the un-derlying principles of our common world, there will be a straight and clearly recognizable path to follow? Well, we simply do not know before we have found out. Even if we

assume that reality as a whole obeys rational principles, and even if we depart from a narrow concept of reason, there is no guarantee that we will end up with one definitive, univocal and unambiguous reality. In this special sense reality is open and unfinished.

This is not a relativistic stance: we do not construct reality, we find out about it. Reason constitutes reality, it does not create it. What exactly is the relation between our thought and Wittgenstein's 'rock bottom' of experience we cannot find out beforehand—we can only speculate about it. We cannot step outside of ourselves to observe the relation between ourselves and the world. Philosophy in dialogue is the never-ending attempt to reach that rock bottom.

On the other hand our analysis means that philosophical dialogue—be it by the exact rules of the Socratic discussion as we know it or otherwise—is something very different from a discussion method defined by a number of regulative rules, which could be practical and useful in other situations.[23] Philosophical dialogue is a specific attempt to live in a common reality with other rational beings; it is practice and serves no other purpose.

> Philosophical inquiry is, as is all search for truth, its own intrinsic aim. But this higher interest in truth, which is independent of any utility, in the last resort has a bearing on the relation between our thinking about reality and confers value only upon those endeavours of the mind, which foster our insight in reality (my translation).[24]

Notes

[1] I will use the terms 'dialogue' and 'discussion' interchangeably.

[2] Particularly interesting examples can be found in Douglas R. Hofstadter & Daniel C. Dennett: *The Mind's I. Fantasies and Reflections on Self and Soul*. Toronto, Bantam Books, 1981. Traces of the dialogue form can clearly be found in the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein, e.g. in his *Philosophical Investigations*.

[3] For a translation see: Confucius: *The Analects (Lun Yü)*. Transl. w. an introd. by D.C. Lau. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1979.

[4] I use the word 'reflect' intentionally, and I do not mean to say that the dialogues of Plato, Confucius or Mencius are literal notes of conversations. Doubts dialogues have often been cast on the reliability of the Platonic dialogues. In the case of Chinese Antiquity, even parts of the *Lunyu* or *Analects* of Confucius may be later additions which simply adopt the literary form of dialogue because they pretend to be 'the words of the master'. For this 'accretion theory' of the *Analects* see: A. Taeko Brooks & E. Bruce Brooks: *The Original Analects : Sayings of Confucius and His Successors*. New York, Columbia Univ. Press, 1997.

[5] A partial translation is: Mo Tzu: *Basic Writings*. Transl. by Burton Watson. New York, Columbia Univ. Press, 1966.

[6] See: Mencius: Translated w. an introd. by D.C. Lau. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1976.

[7] See: *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*. Transl. by Burton Watson. New York, Columbia Univ. Press, 1968. In the case of Zhuangzi, the dialogue form certainly means to express and support

his perspectivistic conception of truth.

[8] Like the famous debate between Mencius and Gaozi on human nature in Book VI-A. Although there is no doubt that this debate reflects the real opinions of the speakers, even here the dialogue may be fictitious and nothing more than a rethorical exercise for the disciples of Mencius. But of course this training was necessary, because real debates of a related form were taking place.

[9] Even mathematicians engaged in public debates in the period of the Renaissance, presenting problems to each other in the hope of finding a sponsor.

[10] Instances of this kind of conversation can be found in a curious collection of the Chinese Middle Ages, the *Shishuo Xinyu*. See: Liu I-ch'ing, *Shih-shuo Hsin-yü. A New Account of Tales of the World*. Commentary by Liu Chün. Transl. by Richard Mather. Minneapolis, Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1976.

[11] See: A.C. Graham, "A First Reading of the 'White Horse'", in *Studies in Chinese Philosophy and Philosophical Literature*, Albany 1986, pp. 167-192.

[12] Such a theory, which we will not discuss here, is proposed by: Robert Alexy: 'Eine Theorie des praktischen Diskurses', in: Willi Oelmüler (Hg.), *Materialien zur Normendiskussion*, Bd. II: *Normenbegrüdung—Normendurchsetzung*, Paderborn, Ferdinand Schöningh, 1978, p. 22-58, esp. §4, 'Die Regeln und Formen des praktischen Diskursus', pp. 36-51.

[13] I leave out discussions about mathematical and physical questions, as they are regularly held, because I especially want to go into the relationship between philosophy and rational discourse. For the application of the Socratic method in teaching mathematics, see: Rainer Loska: *Lehren ohne Belehrung. Leonard Nelsons neusokratische Methode der Gesprächsführung*. ('Teaching without instruction. Leonard Nelson's Neo-Socratic Method of conducting discussions.') Bad Heilbrunn, Verlag Julius Klinkhardt, 1995. This Ph.D. thesis also gives an extensive survey of the Socratic method and its historical background as such.

[14] See: Robert Eno: *The Confucian Creation of Heaven: Philosophy and the Defense of Ritual Mastery*. Albany, State University of New York Press, 1990.

[15] Cf. Leonard Nelson: *Gesammelte Schriften in neun Bänden*. Hrsg. v. Paul Bernays u.a. Bd. IV: *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*. Hamburg, Felix Meiner, 1972. Especially §31ff. Nelson's view on the practice of philosophy and on the Socratic method can be found in two essays: 'Von der Kunst, zu philosophieren' ('The Art of doing philosophy.", in: *Ges. Schriften in 9 Bdn*., I: *Die Schule der kritischen Philosophie und ihre Methode*. Hamburg, Felix Meiner, 1970, pp. 219–245. And: 'Die sokratische Methode' ('The Socratic Method.'), ibid., pp. 269–316.

[16] 'Von der Kunst, zu philosophieren', ibid., p. 223.

[17] Ibid., p. 233.

[18] Ibid., p. 231.

[19] I leave aside the difficult question, whether a judgment simply is a linguistic expression, or whether the judgment is something lying behind the expression and merely expressed in language.

[20] Wilfred Sellars: 'Philosophy and the scientific image of man', in *Science, Perception, and Reality*. London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963.

[21] Ibid., p. 2.

[22] 'Von der Kunst, zu philosophieren', ibid, p. 224.

[23] For the distinction between consitutive and regulative rules, see Gisela Raupach-Strey, 'Grundregeln des sokratischen Gesprächs', in D. Krohn u.a. (Hg.), *Neuere Aspekte des sokratische Gesprächs*, Frankfurt a/M, dipa, 1997.

[24] Ibid., p. 234.

RESEARCH IN PHILOSOPHY FOR CHILDREN

Philosophy for Children in Hong Kong: A Pilot Study

LAM CHI MING

Introduction

To identify unanticipated problems that might arise in a larger study and thus to refine its procedures, a pilot study of Lipman's Philosophy for Children (P4C) program was conducted between 25th September 2003 and 14th November 2003 in a secondary school in Hong Kong. The details of the aims, method and findings of the pilot study are described in the following sections respectively.

Aims of the Pilot Study

The aims of this pilot study were the following:

- To familiarize the researcher with the procedures for selecting participants, teaching P4C, collecting data and analyzing data
- To find out whether students were able to read the philosophical novel on their own and to discuss philosophical questions
- To explore the feasibility of the method of teaching P4C in respect of the allocation of time, role of the teacher, use of teaching aids and teaching strategies
- To evaluate the measuring instruments and revise them if necessary.

Method of the Pilot Study

A school circular was sent to the parents of Secondary One students of a local school, which used English as the medium of instruction and streamed all students below Secondary Four according to their ability, on 19th September 2003 to invite their children to participate in the P4C course. Out of 80 students who accepted the invitation – 16, 19, 15, 18 and 12 of them came from the classes 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D and 1E respectively, 3, 3, 3, 3 and 2 students were randomly selected as participants from the classes 1A, 1B, 1C, 1D and 1E respectively. The researcher, after attending a ten-day training workshop for teachers organized by the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for

Children, taught these 14 participants P4C by means of a philosophical novel entitled *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* (Lipman, 1982), an instructional manual accompanying the novel (Lipman, Sharp & Oscanyan, 1984) and a follow-up tool called My Thinking Log. Excluding the pre-course briefing session, the P4C course comprised eight lessons in which all were videotaped except the last one because the last lesson was scheduled for students to complete two measuring instruments: the New Jersey Test of Reasoning Skills for measuring students' reasoning ability and the Student Questionnaire for examining students' attitude towards doing philosophy in school. With regard to the videotaped discussions, part of them was transcribed, translated – students were allowed to speak in Cantonese during the lessons – and analyzed in two different ways. First, the philosophical content of the transcript was annotated and used as preliminary evidence to demonstrate that students could philosophize. Second, another measuring instrument called the Cognitive Behavior Checklist was used to identify and quantify the students' cognitive behavior characteristic of critical thinking in the transcript.

Findings of the Pilot Study

The following were the findings of the pilot study that will be carefully considered and followed up when the main study is planned.

Difficulty in Reading

Many students found it difficult to comprehend the novel due to problems in understanding its English. In fact, with the help of a glossary in which a large number of English expressions selected from the text were translated into

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Chinese by the researcher, some students still could not grasp the content of Chapter 1 after reading it silently for 40 minutes in Session 1. Therefore, the researcher decided to depart from the standard practice of asking students to read the novel aloud in turns during the lesson. Instead, using the glossary provided by the researcher as a reading aid, they were asked to undertake the reading themselves at home, to reflect on what was interesting, puzzling or problematical about what was read, and to think of a question for sharing with the group. For one thing, most of them were poor readers, and there seemed to be "no reason potentially to alienate poor readers at the outset by requiring that they engage, as a preliminary step to doing philosophy, in an activity in which they have little or no ability (Costello, 2000, p. 40). For another, giving students sufficient time to read at home was thought to be conducive to their comprehension of the novel. The latter was supported by the evidence that the questions presented by students after their home reading of Chapter 1 were comparatively more relevant and interesting than those presented by them immediately after their silent reading in Session 1. For instance, while four students presented the same question, "What is this story talking about?" as if by prior agreement right after their silent reading in Session 1 – showing that they didn't quite understand the content of Chapter 1, none of them presented this question again after their home reading. Indeed, three of them could present the following more relevant and interesting questions: "How does Harry figure out the answer?", "Why can Harry think up these things?" and "Are the discoveries of Harry and Lisa about 'All' and 'No' sentences respectively always true?"

Rules for Discussion

Students were able to generate the following agreed-upon set of rules for discussion on their own during the briefing session.

1. Raise your hand first when you want to speak: whoever raises the hand first can speak first.
2. Share your ideas with everybody once you have them. Don't hide your ideas.
3. Don't interrupt when somebody is speaking.
4. Speak loud enough that everybody can hear you.
5. Take part in the discussion actively: ask more questions and give more opinions.
6. Don't just listen without speaking.
7. Don't say anything that is not relevant to the subject.
8. Don't use foul language.
9. Listen attentively when somebody is speaking.
10. Follow the instructions of the teacher.
11. Concentrate on the discussion. Don't day-dream.
12. Don't say trivial things.

However, students could only obey *most* of these rules in all sessions. Even the researcher himself started breaking the

first rule unwillingly in Session 3: he invited the silent students, who did not say a word in the first two sessions, to express their views on his own initiative, regardless of those students who raised their hands first. It was found that these silent students could actually follow the discussion and form their opinions; they just kept their thoughts to themselves. Although most students accepted the researcher's explanation for breaking the rule – this could make them hear more varied voices – and thus agreed to let him break it occasionally, they still thought that he should respect their right to stay silent and thus should keep such invitation to the minimum.

Ability to Do Philosophy

The following is a transcript (T) of a thirteen-minute discussion extracted from the discussion in Session 4 on the question, "What exactly is Harry thinking about?" The numbers in square brackets denote the sequence of ideas put forward by pseudonymous students and the researcher (LCM).

[1] Tony: I think Harry often day-dreams during the lessons. What he thinks up is what he day-dreams about.

[2] Jack: I think Harry is in a half-asleep state but not in a hypnotic trance. He is not fully awake so he doesn't pay attention.

(LCM stops Kirk from toying with his pen.)

[3] Sandra: I think maybe it is the boring lesson that makes Harry think nonsense.

[4] LCM: Can I ask a question first? What do you think is the meaning of "thinking nonsense"?

[5] Jack: Thinking something that is not serious.

[6] Tony: When you think nonsense, you may think something odd.

[7] Sandra: When you think nonsense, you are thinking something that is not real.

[8] LCM: (To the whole group) Do you agree with these ideas? Or, do you have other ideas?

(There is no response from the group. After 12 seconds' silence, LCM speaks again.)

[9] LCM: Literally, "thinking nonsense" can mean "directing our thoughts to nonsense" or "directing our thoughts in a nonsensical way." But can we really direct our thoughts in a nonsensical way when we are thinking? … Can we think up frivolous things – i.e. think nonsense, according to the definition of Jack – when we are thinking about something seriously? … What exactly is the meaning of thinking? Do frivolous thoughts come from frivolous thinking? What is the meaning of serious and frivolous thinking? Can we really distinguish between these two kinds of thinking?

[10] Jack: What is serious is, for example, something related to the topic under discussion in the lesson. What is frivolous is (doing) something irrelevant to the topic under discussion, say, thinking about geography when you are taking lessons in astronomy.

[11] Sandra: I disagree with him. Because I think "thinking nonsense" is not like that. What is frivolous, I think,

is doing something like whispering jokingly to others that the teacher has horns on her head when she is speaking … In other words, thinking about other things sometimes should not be regarded as frivolous. It depends on what you think about. If you think something in order to joke or tease, then you are frivolous.

[12] LCM: Should "thinking something in order to joke or tease" be regarded as "thinking nonsense" then?

[13] Tony: If you have the intention of joking, you should not be regarded as thinking nonsense.

[14] LCM: Under what conditions should one be counted as thinking nonsense then?

[15] Tony: If the jokey things you think up arise only from thinking in a really non-sensical way, you think nonsense.

[16] LCM: (To the whole group) Do you understand what he says?

(Many students shake their heads.)

[17] LCM: Tony, can you explain more?

[18] Tony: When you think in a really non-sensical way and think about jokey things at the same time, you think nonsense.

[19] Jack: I disagree slightly with the view that you must be thinking about jokey things when you think nonsense. For example, after you read a ghost story, maybe you will think of being possessed by a devil. This is not a jokey matter but should be regarded as thinking nonsense.

(LCM stops Kirk from toying with his novel and requests Jack to repeat what he has just said.)

[20] Simon: I think you are in a half-asleep state when you think nonsense.

[21] LCM: Why?

[22] Simon: Because you can think up these things only when you are drowsy. You will not think up such frivolous things when you are fully awake.

[23] LCM: Do you mean that when somebody is awake, he or she should not be able to think up those things which can only be thought out by thinking nonsense?

[24] Simon: Yes.

[25] LCM: (To the whole group) What do you think?

[26] Kenneth: (Looking at LCM) Should those people with mental disorder be regarded as thinking nonsense?

(LCM reminds students to look at the person to whom they are responding and asks Kenneth whether he is questioning LCM or Simon)

[27] Kenneth: (Looking at LCM again) Do people with mental disorder always think nonsense? Or, does mental disorder arise from thinking nonsense frequently?

[28] LCM: Are you questioning me, Simon or the group?

[29] Kenneth: The group.

[30] Sandra: Mental disorder is much more serious than thinking nonsense. Mental disorder is an illness but thinking nonsense is not. Sometimes it (thinking nonsense) is merely like day-dreaming of the brain … We (normal people) sometimes day-dream too. This does not mean that we are people with mental disorder …

(For the sake of argument, LCM briefly describes the symptoms of mental disorder to students.)

[31] Jack: I think people with mental disorder think nonsense more frequently. Normal people also think nonsense but less frequently.

[32] LCM: … Does this mean that all people think nonsense? In fact, can we control our brain and prevent it from thinking nonsense?

[33] Kathy: No, we can't.

[34] LCM: Why not?

[35] Kathy: Because sometimes when you are day-dreaming you are, perhaps, thinking nonsense already.

[36] LCM: Do you mean we cannot prevent ourselves from day-dreaming?

[37] Kathy: Yes.

This discussion was philosophical in the sense that it was concerned with "thinking about thinking" – indeed, it was centred on the thinking about "thinking nonsense." As Splitter and Sharp (1995) put it, "Reflective thinking which corrects and improves itself is central to philosophy. Philosophy seeks to examine and elucidate the nature of thinking, when that thinking is concerned with matters of judgement and appraisal" (p. 90). What follows is a set of annotations made according to the contributions of students in order to demonstrate the ability of students to philosophize:

- Implying that one keeps on thinking while day-dreaming [1]
- Showing awareness of the difference between a half-asleep state and a hypnotic trance [2]
- Suggesting boredom as the cause of thinking nonsense [3]
- Characterizing thinking nonsense as thinking something that is frivolous [5], odd [6] and unreal [7]
- Distinguishing between serious thinking and frivolous thinking [10 & 11]
- Suggesting intention as a decisive factor in the characterization of thinking nonsense as thinking "jokey" things [13]
- Characterizing thinking nonsense as thinking about "jokey" things in a really non-sensical way [15 & 18]
- Refuting the assumption that thinking about "jokey" things is a necessary condition for thinking nonsense [19]
- Asserting the impossibility of thinking nonsense in a fully-awake state [20, 22 & 24]
- Questioning the relation between thinking nonsense and mental disorder [26 & 27]
- Drawing a distinction between thinking nonsense and mental disorder [30]
- Comparing normal people and people with mental disorder in terms of thinking nonsense [31]
- Asserting the impossibility of preventing ourselves from day-dreaming and thus from thinking nonsense [33, 35 & 37].

Time, Pace and Mode

The appropriate time for each session was found to be 90 minutes rather than 75 minutes. Yet, a longer lesson didn't necessarily mean teaching more things or learning at a faster pace. The reason was that the pace of discussion depended on the capability of students, among whom the individual differences in learning were considerable—for example, in Session 2, while most students were still trying hard to figure out what it meant by finding a counter-example to disprove Harry's discovery about "All" sentences [i.e. the discovery that if the original "All" sentence with the form "All X are Y" was true (e.g. "All cats are animals"), where X and Y were the subject and predicate of this sentence respectively, then the sentence with the reversed subject and predicate (i.e. "All animals are cats") would be false], a boy actually came up with such a beautiful counterexample as "All sea animals are animals that live in the sea," which was still true when its subject and predicate were reversed, within a minute. To strike the balance between limited time and reasonable pace as well as between discussions on Aristotelian logic and other philosophical issues, a moderate bipartite mode of teaching was tried: allocating each chapter a maximum of two sessions for discussing questions about Aristotelian logic and other philosophical issues respectively. The result of this trial run was found to be satisfactory.

Dual Role of the Teacher

Judging from the fact that students were heavily dependent on the researcher's directions (e.g. to remind them to pay more attention to the logical form rather than the content of sentences) when discussing questions about Aristotelian logic and that they often failed to discipline themselves (e.g. to follow the agreed rules for discussion), it seemed inevitable for a P4C teacher to assume the role of a *director* - providing guidance for students and exercising supervision over them – if the classroom community of inquiry was to be maintained properly. However, another role of the teacher as a *facilitator* in discussion was found equally important. This role included asking relevant questions to sustain, extend and focus various lines of thought; requesting reasons and evidence to support judgements; seeking clarification of ideas and questions; asking for implications and conclusions; summarizing key points to help understanding; rewarding every positive contribution to the discussion with verbal or non-verbal expressions of approval and admiration; and playing the devil's advocate to stimulate discussion, especially when students were not ready to challenge the viewpoints of others. Difficult as it was, fulfilment of the teacher's dual role as director and facilitator was crucial to the success of the P4C programme.

Importance of the Instructional Manual

The instructional manual accompanying the novel was found very helpful and actually indispensable to the teacher. Filled with discussion plans – each of which consisted of a group of questions around a central concept or problem – and exercises for extending leading ideas related to the story, the manual was designed to stimulate students to think more deeply, widely and systematically about the key topic of discussion; and to "focus the discussion on the topic, to clarify the meanings at issue, and to keep the conversation from straying out of bounds" (Lipman, Sharp & Oscanyan, 1984, p. ii) respectively. Indeed, since students had hardly any experience of formal logic and thus had difficulty in contributing ideas to discussions about it, the manual was found particularly useful when dealing with logical reasoning: apart from offering students drill that was aimed at different patterns of logical sentences, the manual contained a lot of well-organized instances in exercises that helped students generalize and infer significant conclusions. Yet, to make the best use of the manual, the teacher had to be aware of two things. First, students might have difficulty in understanding the content of exercises and thus need the teacher's clarification and explanation before embarking on them. For example, in Session 3, students spent much time arguing about whether such sentences as "No chickens are birds" and "No squares are rectangles" in exercise 10 of Chapter 1 were false without reaching a correct conclusion simply because they didn't know "chickens" and "squares" belonged to "birds" and "rectangles" respectively. If the researcher had clarified the sentences first without wrongly assuming students to understand them, students would not have spent so much time on the argument which was obviously not the purpose of the exercise. Second, the exercises were built on previous ones and had continuity with one another. In other words, students had better proceed in an orderly way and step by step. This partly explained why those students who had not yet grasped the structure of "All" sentences (introduced in Chapter 1) made so many mistakes when asked to rewrite everyday language sentences as "All" sentences (in Exercise 4 of Chapter 2).

Use of My Thinking Log

Constructed with "lead-ins" that were used to promote visual representation of thoughts ("A picture of my idea looks like …") and such higher-level thinking processes as evaluation ("How do you think you did? Why?" & "How do you think we did? Why?"), problem solving ("I conclude that …") and decision making ("I disagree with _____ because …") (Fogarty, 1991), My Thinking Log was primarily designed as a follow-up to P4C lessons for students to reflect on the philosophical discussion by logging their thinking: students were required to finish their thinking logs at home on the same day that they had the P4C lesson – while they still had a good memory of what had happened in the class – and to submit their work to the teacher in the following lesson. In fact, 9 of 14 students agreed or strongly agreed to the statement "Doing My

Thinking Log helps me reflect on what I think in philosophy lessons" in the Student Questionnaire. And it was found that some students could express themselves better if they were allowed to write their thinking logs in Chinese.

Effective Strategies

Two problems which commonly occurred during discussion were that students interrupted each other (e.g. speaking or raising their hands when somebody was speaking) and that students did not pay attention (e.g. chatting with their neighbors or toying with their pens). One strategy which was found to be quite effective for solving these problems was to give students note paper to write down two different kinds of things: what they couldn't wait to say – including who they agreed or disagreed with – so as to check their impulse to interrupt, and what they or the teacher thought important to remember – including ideas arising from the discussion, explanations of the teacher, answers to the instructional manual's exercises, questions selected for group discussion etc. – so as to focus their attention. Indeed, the notes taken also served as a timely reminder for students to complete their thinking logs at home. Another strategy was to deal with students' interruptive or inattentive behaviour immediately, even at the expense of the flow of discussion, in order to prevent the spread of such behaviour among the group.

Moreover, since the discussion often tacked back and forth as it proceeded, a sense of incompleteness about the activity sometimes arose at the end of discussion. Although this was partly inevitable in that "inquiry does not end with the discussion but is part of a continuing process of questioning, reflection and attempts to formulate better understanding of complex matters" (Fisher, 1998, p. 184), one strategy which was found useful for providing a suitable sense of closure was to offer students an opportunity to say their "final words": each student was given a final turn – one minute, at most – to say anything about the discussion which they had not said before or had not had the chance to say just before the end of the session. Here, to achieve a desirable result, the teacher should not allow any student to interrupt or respond when somebody was saying final words on the one hand, and should not summarize the whole discussion before students said their final words – in order not to tempt students to repeat what s/he said – on the other. It was found that some silent students who didn't say a word until the end of discussion sometimes were able to advance interesting new ideas during the saying-final-words time. Accordingly, this strategy ensured not only that every student could have his or her say but also that the community of inquiry would not miss any points.

Measuring Instruments

With the help of a glossary in which a large number of English expressions selected from the Student Questionnaire (SQ) and New Jersey Test of Reasoning Skills

(NJTRS) were translated into Chinese by the researcher, students required 25 minutes and 50 minutes to complete the SQ and NJTRS respectively. To compute the internal consistency reliability of these two measuring instruments, the statistical package SPSS 11.0.0 was used. It was found that the Cronbach's coefficient alphas for the scaled items in section A of the SQ (SQA) and the NJTRS were 0.5243 and 0.8023 respectively. A high level of internal consistency of 0.8023 shown by the NJTRS, together with its validity – including content, construct and concurrent validity – well claimed by its publisher (Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children, 1995), suggested that the NJTRS could be used with a reasonable degree of confidence with participants in the main study. As for the SQA, since the item statistics indicated that removal of the questions 9, 10 and 11 from it would significantly improve its internal reliability – indeed, the Cronbach's coefficient alpha would rise from 0.5243 to 0.6517 if these three items were deleted together, after a careful review of all its items, the questions 9 and 10 were rewritten while the question 11 was deleted. Besides, the Cognitive Behavior Checklist (CBC) comprising 17 items was used to identify and quantify the students' cognitive behavior characteristic of critical thinking in the transcript (T) of the above-mentioned thirteen-minute discussion. The results are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1 shows that students displayed the cognitive behavior "Seeks to clarify ill-defined concepts" (i.e. item 11) most frequently while none of them "Asks that claims be supported by evidence" (item 3) during the discussion. To assess the reliability of rating transcripts by means of the CBC, interrater reliability will be determined in the main study by inviting one secondary schoolteacher to rate the transcripts independently and then comparing the analyses of the teacher and the researcher (Gay & Airasian, 2000).

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		Table 1: Quantity and Location of Students' Cognitive Behaviour in Transcript (T)		

CBC item	Frequency of item	Whereabouts
1	2	[26] & [27]
2	1	[11]: "In other words, thinking about other things sometimes should not be regarded as frivolous. It depends on what you think about." *(i.e. thinking about other things should not be regarded as "always" frivolous)*
3	0	Nowhere
4	3	[1], [2] & [3]
5	1	[2]: "I think Harry is *in a half-asleep state but not in a hypnotic trance.*"
6	3	[20] *(building on the idea of Jack in [2])*, [31] *(building on the idea of Sandra in [30])* & [35] *(building on the idea of Sandra in [30])*

CBC item	Frequency of item	Whereabouts
7	2	Between [11] & [12] *(because Jack did not behave defensively towards Sandra right after he was criticized by her in [11])*; & between [19] & [20] *(because neither Tony nor Sandra behaved defensively towards Jack right after their ideas were criticized by Jack in [19])*
8	4	[6], [7], [11] & [19]
9	1	[19]: "I disagree slightly with the *view* that you must be thinking about jokey things when you think nonsense."
10	1	[30]: "Sometimes it (thinking nonsense) is merely like day-dreaming of the brain …"
11	14	{[5], [6], [7], [13], [15], [18], [19], [20], [26], [27], [30] & [31]} *(clarifying the concept of "thinking nonsense")*; & {[10] & [11]} *(clarifying the concept of "being frivolous")*
12	7	[11], [13], [15], [18], [19], [30] & [31]
13	7	[2], [3], [11], [19], [22], [30] & [35]

CBC item	Frequency of item	Whereabouts
14	4	[10]: "What is serious is, for example, something related to the topic under discussion in the lesson";[10]: "What is frivolous is (doing) something irrelevant to the topic under discussion, say, thinking about geography when you are taking lessons in astronomy";[11]: "What is frivolous, I think, is doing something like whispering jokingly to others that the teacher has horns on her head when she is speaking …"; &[19]: "For example, after you read a ghost story, maybe you will
15	3	[11] *(seeking to uncover the assumption of Jack in [10] that thinking irrelevant things is "always" frivolous)*, [19] *(seeking to uncover the assumption of Tony in [18] that thinking about jokey things is a necessary condition for thinking nonsense)* & [26] *(seeking to uncover the assumption of Simon in [24] that all people, including people with mental disorder, are unable to think nonsense when they are awake)*

CBC item	Frequency of item	Whereabouts
16	6	[1], [2], [3], [19], [22] *(as the premise of the conclusion in [20])* & [30] *(the premise and conclusion are "Mental disorder is an illness but thinking nonsense is not" and "Mental disorder is much more serious than thinking nonsense" respectively)*
17	7	[2], [11], [13], [15], [18], [19] & [30]

Total:	66 Cognitive Behaviours

Offering a Frame to Put Experience In:
Margaret Wise Brown Presents Ideas as Opportunities to Very Young Children

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PETER SHEA

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Margaret Wise Brown's books introduce basic ideas to beginning human beings. In this essay, I will discuss her picture books as tools for provoking philosophic reflection in young children and as meditations on the situation of the very young child and on the reflective work of the young child at a time when language is still new and fresh. Some of her work concerns the most fundamental negotiation in personal philosophy—the negotiation of an attitude to the outside world, to those realities beyond one's control, beyond one's zone of comfort. This work places Margaret Wise Brown in the same conceptual territory as Descartes, in those early *Meditations* that take seriously the idea that a person could be totally alone, without company or a public world. Her writing makes her a colleague of Kant, in the sections of *The Critique of Pure Reason* that question the place of subjective, private consciousness in an objective and public world.

I am aware of the dangers of making grand and abstract claims about simple books. A passage from Frederick Crews' delicious book *The Pooh Perplex* hovers before me:

> To begin with, the reader is invited to peer more closely than is his wont at the opening chapter of *Winnie the Pooh*. What does he find? A story about a certain tree which proves irresistibly attractive to our hero, who conceives a certain passion for removing and eating something he finds upon it. With increasing pride in his ability to snatch the spoils without assistance, much less with official permission to touch this cer-

tain product, he climbs nearly to the top of the tree and – *falls.* (Italics mine.) Of course, once the *lapsus* has been acted through, it must repeat itself endlessly, at least until the Atonement comes.[1]

As satire on overextended, boring, useless readings of luminously clear texts, *The Pooh Perplex* has no equal. It has probably prevented some bad scholarship, especially in children's literature; with respect to Margaret Wise Brown's work, one finds in the indexes and bibliographies only a handful of substantial articles treating her books in any general or theoretical way. Crews might well take credit for this "needed hole in the literature."

Surely, one must have a reason for doing general commentary on accessible, clear, and beloved texts: commentary is most often in place when texts depend heavily on an unfamiliar context, when they make use of difficult concepts, when they are undervalued by their natural audiences. I have two reasons for undertaking this perilous experiment. First, the commentary I want to give is in the

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spirit of some of Margaret Wise Brown's stated intentions for her books. As I will try to show, Brown intends some of her books to shape the interactions between reader and child. The books are best seen as akin to musical compositions to be fully realized in performance; they come to fulfillment when they are re-read, and when the patterns of thought they model become regular games that parents and teachers play with young children. My commentary is in the spirit of performance notes—to facilitate an authentic performance of these books.

Second, the heritage of Margaret Wise Brown is being eroded and diluted today in ways that require some scholarly resistance. One finds on the shelves of bookstores books under her name with illustrations by contemporary illustrators who work in a different spirit than those with whom Brown collaborated. This seems important. Brown chose illustrators carefully, and she worked very closely with them. To the extent that a children's picture book is a fusion of picture and text, one has reason to doubt that the work now being marketed under Brown's name is fully her own: one does not know whether she would approve its publication were she alive today. Also, some of the books bearing her name were copyrighted after her death, and were based on unpublished manuscripts. One has no way of knowing the status of these unpublished manuscripts, or her view about their readiness for publication. Brown wrote quickly and revised manuscripts over sometimes as many as two years, testing them out on young children to get the language exactly right. As Barbara Bader says, in her article, "A Lien on the World," "We can never be certain just what a writer thought of a particular unpublished manuscript. We can never be sure, especially in the case of a writer like Brown, who died suddenly, which ones she had set aside as unworthy, which she intended to polish, which she might have sent off in the next morning's mail."[2]

With respect to, for example, philosophy manuscripts, responsible publishers would make clear distinctions between finished works and notes or drafts for future work; they would never present the notes as independent works on which the reputation of the philosopher should depend. But the late manuscripts of Margaret Wise Brown are presented in formats indistinguishable from those of the books she approved for publication. This makes it very difficult for a reader encountering her work for the first time to form any just estimate of her basic concerns or projects. It seems as if the publisher simply lacks any conception that it might be important to respect the basic concerns or projects of a picture book author; as long as the story is amusing, who cares how it is understood? Funny little stories about rabbits don't matter much.

The remedy for disrespect is respect: discussion that places Brown's work as a contribution to important conversations and as a serious effort to be of service to children and adults. One needs to remind everybody that great cultures are built on little stories taken seriously: the parables of Jesus, the stories of the Hasidic rabbis, the anecdotes from the life of Confucius and the Buddha. The cultural importance of a story has never depended on its length or complexity. I hope my remarks will contribute to a respectful re-evaluation of Brown's lifework.

I will begin by describing my own introduction to Margaret Wise Brown's writings, in the course of my involvement with the philosophy for children movement, to show how her purposes are similar to the purposes of this educational project. I will then discuss a selection of her works, to make clear how her books model philosophically interesting attitudes and relationships to the world and how they initiate interesting projects of investigation and discovery. Finally, I will relate this approach to Brown's own educational background and her work at the Bank Street School, to show how her work is continuous with the Bank Street philosophy and yet different from that philosophy in some of its fundamental projects.

I was gradually introduced to Brown's work over 25 years of teaching philosophy to elementary school children. This introduction shaped my appreciation of her stories and my understanding of how they can be used by readers and discussion leaders. In the late 1970's, I attended a professor-training workshop in philosophy for children led by Matthew Lipman, who had left a philosophy chair at Columbia some years earlier to write philosophy curriculum for school children. A small group of philosophers worked intensively for thirteen days, practicing a new approach to philosophy teaching: using simple stories as the starting point for philosophic discussions shaped by the interests and concerns of the participants. We worked through the entire curriculum of novels developed by Lipman for use in elementary and secondary schools. It was an intellectual adventure that changed my approach to philosophy and to philosophy teaching; I became convinced that philosophy teaching could only succeed by provoking exploratory and self-critical discussions involving all the students in a common investigation – what Lipman called a "community of inquiry."

When I finished the training, I worked for some years in colleges and in elementary schools to develop my skills as a discussion leader. I did short term demonstrations in elementary classrooms, conference presentations for philosophy professors, and workshops for parents. In most of these contexts, the discussion strategies of the philosophy for children movement were the central focus, rather than the Lipman curriculum of stories and exercises. Parents and teachers were seeking new ways of interacting with their children, but were generally not eager to adopt a curriculum. For this reason, my workshops drew heavily on a tradition of philosophic inquiry with children that developed parallel to Matthew Lipman's efforts, the work of Gareth Matthews at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Matthews pioneered the use of children's books as the starting point for philosophic discussion, in various ways: by introducing "read to a child" exercises into his classes, by

recounting his conversations around children's stories in his book *Philosophy and the Young Child*, by producing a philosophy curriculum series based on children's stories, the Wise Owl curriculum, and by writing the column "Thinking in Stories" for *Thinking*. I drew on all of this work, and on conversations with Matthews, to shape a "reading kit" of stories for classroom and demonstration uses.

Arnold Lobel's "Frog and Toad" books were initially the mainstays of my philosophy library, because they were motivated by recognizable philosophical perplexities, and they inspired recognizable philosophic conversations. In "Dragons and Giants," for example, the heroes read about knights fighting dragons and are moved to ask whether they also are brave, like the knights in the story. This question prompts a kind of moral experiment, a climb up a dangerous mountain, during which Frog and Toad persevere in the face of terrible danger, despite frequent fearful breakdowns and panic attacks. The puzzles raised by the story are old puzzles: philosophers have been arguing about bravery since the time of Plato and Aristotle: about whether bravery can be manifested in everyday life as well as in traditional heroic contexts, whether bravery can coexist with fear, whether foolhardy adventures – like, perhaps, climbing a dangerous mountain for no practical reason – count as instances of bravery. These traditional questions, and many more, arise regularly in response to this story. "Dragons and Giants" is the most reliable tool I know for provoking and displaying coherent philosophic inquiry to beginners.

As I expanded my repertoire, and especially as I began working with younger children, I encountered two works by Margaret Wise Brown that were clearly powerful for eliciting discussion, but in different ways than Lobel's pieces: *Goodnight Moon* and *The Important Book*. Both of these provoked passionate, coherent, interesting conversation, but the results were harder to connect to standard philosophic questions than the conversations responding to Lobel's stories. Children and adults recognized, for example, that going to sleep evokes both fear and perplexity in people: one blinks out of normal existence for eight hours. Somehow, the ritual in *Goodnight Moon* seemed to be an appropriate response to that anxiety and to that perplexity, and people tried to give some account of why this response is so fitting and so comforting. It seemed that Brown was tapping a different kind of philosophic energy. Perhaps she was engaging in a different level of reflection on human life and on the world.

My initial exposure to the work of Margaret Wise Brown was very late and very peculiar. I encountered her books as devices for starting philosophic conversations, at a point in my career in which I was ransacking my bookshelves for stories to use in the classroom. I had just been trained in a teaching discipline that took the teacher's role to be that of inspiring and maintaining freestanding student conversations, independent of the teacher, in which important aspects of human life are explored using argument and imagination.

When, after many years of using Brown's work in the classroom, I finally had time to think about her place within the canon of philosophically provocative children's literature, I came across this statement, from an article she wrote for *The Book of Knowledge* about creative writing for very young children. Brown was commenting on her own jacket copy from one of her books:

> This book hopes to touch their imaginings and to suggest further imaginings in the realm of a child's reality." That last line still interests me. What did I mean? "To touch their imaginings and to suggest further imaginings, in the realm of a child's reality." I think I meant that a child's story is only a stepping stone into the world that a real story can open up for him. In some stories you give facts, tools for a child's imagination to go further on. In some stories you give a very young child a form to put his own observations into – as in *The Noisy Books* or *The Important Book* published by Harpers. In some stories you have the luck to charm him into a good story that for a few moments seems real to him. But it is in the child that the story continues and, fusing with memory, can even become part of him.[3]

"A child's story is only a stepping stone into the world that a real story can open up for him." I take this to mean something like this: a child's story introduces the child to the world in a way that allows him or her to go further, to have his or her own adventures with the world, in directions suggested by the story. Given my experience with the philosophy for children curriculum and strategy, I found this statement very exciting: Brown seemed to want her books to be used in something like the way that Lipman and Matthews suggest stories might be used philosophically: as provocations for reflection on the world and for adventures in the world. In philosophy for children discussions, stories prompt freely chosen but structured investigations of the world. Brown seems to be saying here that some of her stories are written with just that purpose in mind.

Brown wrote another summary statement in that article, in a somewhat different mood:

> A book should try to accomplish something more than just to repeat a child's own experiences. One would hope rather to make a child laugh or feel clear and happy-headed as he follows a simple rhythm to its logical end, to jog him with the unexpected and comfort him with the familiar: and perhaps to lift him for a few minutes from his own problems of shoelaces that won't tie and busy parents and mysterious clock-time, into the world of a bug or a bear or a bee or a boy living in the timeless world of story.[4]

The emphasis in this statement is on comfort, diversion, escape, amusement—and surely those emphases are also important in Brown's work. As one surveys the critical response to her books throughout the years, however, using the fine collection made by the *Children's Literature Review*, one finds that reviewers have taken their cue about how to read her books largely from this sort of statement. They evaluate the stories for their appeal, their amusement value, their wit and poetry: the editor's summary statement captures most of the reviews quoted:

> Written from a child's perspective, Brown's books convey the warmth of maternal love, the need for independence, and an appreciation of nature. Her texts, with their reassuring themes, instinctive rhythm, and comfortable repetition of phrases and ideas, continue to delight children three decades after her death.[5]

But Brown's other purpose – the purpose of making a story into a stepping stone to a real story in the real world—is seldom acknowledged, though it seems to me an equally strong element in her work. Lois Palmer does acknowledge this strain in Brown's work in her review of *A Child's Goodnight Book*: "Entertainment is basic, of course, but along with that go the enlarging of horizons, the translation of impressions into ideas, the linking of the child with the outside world."[6] But apart from Palmer, one might think from the reviews cited in the *Children's Literature Review* that entertainment, comfort, and amusement constituted Brown's entire project. I would like to follow the direction suggested by Brown's remarks about her books as "stepping stones," and to sketch out the kinds of intellectual adventures initiated by the encounter with her picture books.

I understand Brown's books as attempts to illuminate for young children the delicate relationship between self and non-self, familiar and strange, outside and inside – as helping children to see their options as they confront the world beyond their zone of comfort and control. Brown invites children to take forays into unfamiliar territory. The books discussed below present this invitation in various different ways.

Let us consider first the books which Brown identifies in her article on creative writing for young children as "giving a very young child a form to put his own observations into" – the *Noisy Books* and *The Important Book*. The *Noisy Books* contain questions. In the original *Noisy Book*, for example, Muffin, a dog with a bandage over his eyes, hears sounds, and the readers are asked to identify them. The story also describes sounds, e.g. "the sound of a horse galloping," and the readers are invited to say what the sound is. And finally, the story asks whether a person could hear a particular sound, like snow falling or grass growing.

All of these questions require a lively interaction between the child and the person reading the story, and all invite controversy: has the reader made the sound accurately? *Can* one hear morning come or the snow fall?

The *Noisy Books* reflect a fact of everybody's life, and of children's lives especially: some things are immediately present, and other things are present—represented, from offstage. Often, the things that are fully in front of us take up all our minds, and we don't notice the "representations" of other things that give our world depth and expanse. The *Noisy Books* put Muffin into various strange states: being blindfolded, in a crate on a train, confined to a room—states in which his immediate surroundings are boring or oppressive. He is forced to notice how the outside world is represented by sounds—and in the course of realizing that, he comes to realize that he is within a larger world than his immediate surroundings. The basic mental act modeled in these books is the act of imagining concretely the world as bigger than it at first seems, especially when it seems small and confining. That is not a trivial action. If children carry forward the pattern in these books, alone or in the company of their parents, being alert for signs of a larger world than the one they most readily perceive, that is a profound change of mind.

It is also a move in the direction of mental health. The oddity of the *Noisy Books* is that Muffin is placed in circumstances which, in any other children's writer's work, would be used to evoke pity: the poor dog can't see; the poor dog is shut up in a crate on a train; the poor dog has to stay inside. But the books take a quick right turn into a different attitude altogether: "But Muffin could *hear*!" In that sentence, in that shift of emphasis, is a telling example of the kind of conceptual possibility that Margaret Wise Brown offers children, in many different ways, in her writing.

The Important Book consists of a series of lists, of which this is one example:

> The important thing about rain is
> That it is wet.
> It falls out of the sky,
> And it sounds like rain,
> And makes things shiny,
> And does not taste like anything
> And is the color of air.
> But the important thing about rain
> Is that it is wet.[7]

One reviewer commented: "The dogmatic text is a disappointment. If only Margaret Wise Brown had written questions instead of flat statements."[8] But this comment misses the point. This book works as a form to put experience in—that is, it provides rules for ongoing interactions far beyond the scope of the book.. The book is an effort to pick a fight with the listener. Any rule one might formulate about how Brown is choosing her important things is vio-

lated somewhere in the book. She is pretty clearly trying to provoke the listener into disagreeing, and so to draw the listener into the game of saying about things what "the important thing" is. As a new idea about organizing experience, this is very powerful. All kinds of intellectual endeavors have their beginnings in this kind of opinion. Brown is trying to give her listeners, at a very age, the idea of entertaining such opinions playfully and of discussing such opinions with others.

The basic message of *The Important Book* isn't all that different from the message of *The Noisy Book*. In the latter, Brown suggests that there may be "representations" of the broader world always around us which we generally ignore, until someone puts a bandage over our eyes or forces us to stay in our room. In *The Important Book*, Brown suggests that the experience that is immediately in front of us may have complexities which we generally ignore: the various aspects of things come to us independent and equal, but they may properly stand in some sort of hierarchy. Some things may be "the important things." We can only notice this by asking the right question, by paying a special sort of attention.

Let us think for a moment– to use Brown's language from her article— about how a child would go on into a real story from these two children's stories. A child who had taken *The Noisy Book* to heart would constantly be listening—and by extension looking and sniffing—for signs of things offstage, beyond the center of consciousness. He or she would constantly be aware that the world in front of him or her is part of a much larger world. The game of asking what is that noise, and what noise would that thing make, carried forward, leads straight to science, straight to the sort of probing consciousness that can find endless interest in almost anything. The game is simple, but the basic idea is powerful.

Similarly, the person who had taken *The Important Book* to heart would have learned to ask the question, "What's important here?" and to entertain a variety of answers to that question. The game of asking the question, and fighting over the answers, leads straight to a hundred kinds of thinking about the world: aesthetic thought, practical thought, religious thought. Once one has the basic question, one may stumble into all sorts of different frameworks for answering it.

It is important to remember that these books are seldom read by children alone. They are read to them by parents, and often read over and over. They provide the parents with openings for activities to help children feel comfortable in a world that is larger than the familiar space around them and more complicated than they at first think.

If this line of thought accurately portrays Brown's intentions, then she is being modest when she talks about giving a child "a form to put his observations into." In fact she is attempting is to initiate a child into ways of thinking about the world, ways of easily moving beyond immediate experience into a richer and more complex world. This way

of reading Brown's purposes makes sense of quite a number of her books, in addition to the ones she mentions in the *Book of Knowledge* article.

Think of the connection between the *Noisy Books* and a book very different in tone, *The Dead Bird*. Brown tells a sad story: a bird has died. The children find it while it is still warm. They respond in an unusual way to that sadness: they want to be adult about it, that is, to try out the forms that adults have invented for addressing death. And so they bury the bird in a beautiful and kind way, and they sing a song that seems to them very beautiful, and they mark a place for the bird and return to it every day, "until they forget." Like Muffin in *The Noisy Book* , these children have taken a right turn aside from brute misery, this time toward culture. They have gotten the idea that somewhere in the things that grown-ups do there is a way of coping with this sad event. They are not just alone and helpless, a bunch of children confronted with death for the first time. They have tried something: to reach out to their culture for a way of shaping their feelings and giving those feelings beautiful and appropriate expression. Again, if one thinks of this book as a first step, as modeling a way of responding, as a story that leads children into their own real stories, one is struck by the importance of the suggestion. There are many realities that people encounter which are initially too big for them: pain, violence, remorse, sexual desire—and they face the choice of going it alone or seeking out cultural resources for managing and channeling and transforming their feelings and impulses. In the same way that *The Important Book* gives children a form to put their observations in, *The Dead Bird* suggests that there are forms to put feelings in, that one can move beyond simple feeling to something better and richer.

The most familiar of Brown's books is *Goodnight Moon*, a book about going to sleep for very young children. One way to understand this story is to think of it as directed toward the child who does not want to go to sleep, who is still afraid that going to sleep means leaving—and perhaps losing—all the things he loves, all the things that give him comfort and security. The book reassures him on this point: as the light dims, everything is still there, just dim. The comfortable and rich world in which he lives endures around him. But then there's the mouse. The mouse stays in the room, but it moves around, and this sets up a game of "find the mouse" between the reader and the child. At the end, when the little rabbit is asleep, the mouse is looking out the window, very much awake. The world has not come to a halt when the rabbit goes to sleep. It is not simply waiting for him to wake up. The world is alive, and therefore unpredictable, but there's nothing wrong with that. The world is predictable enough, safe enough.

The idea behind this story, the frame for sorting experience here, is perhaps the most basic one of all, the idea of the world as independent of the person, as going on when the person is asleep, as having a mind of its own even, like the mouse. And the story shows children a way of feeling

happy about that: the world outside them holds them up, keeps them safe, does good and beautiful things apart from them: the mouse watches the stars, while the rabbit sleeps. This is a very big idea, in very simple frame: one can approve of the world apart from oneself. One kind of religion starts with this idea.

Something similar is happening in Brown's *The Big Fur Secret*. The story is about a boy who goes to the zoo. As soon as he enters the zoo, all of the animals know he has a secret. He looks at the animals for awhile, and then watches the people watching the animals, making up silly stories about them: the giraffe is mad at you because you spilled your milk—that kind of story. And the boy knows that that all of these stories aren't true, because, as we learn on the last page, animals don't talk. That is the great fur secret. Extended, it is a very big secret indeed: things aren't the way we make them up. Animals, and other things in the world, have a life of their own. And knowing that changes the way one looks at everything, makes one a different person.

One fruitful way of understanding the philosophic depths of Margaret Wise Brown's approach to writing for children is to place her work in the context of her own training as a teacher and writer, in classrooms and the writer's workshop of the Lucy Sprague Mitchell's Bank Street School. Brown absorbed many of Mitchell's ideas about working with children: the emphasis on children's language as expression and play, the commitment to studying children's experience and taking it seriously, the ideal of developing writing for children in dialogue with children. Leonard Marcus characterizes Brown's debt to Bank Street this way, "*Bumble Bugs and Elephants* (1938), *The Little Fireman* (1938), *A Child's Good Night Book* (1943), *They All Saw It* (1944), and *Where Have You Been* (1952) are among the many books in which, sentence by sentence or stanza by stanza, Brown presented young children with simple, gamelike structures in which to frame their own rhymes, thoughts, and perceptions. In thus extending to readers an invitation not to hold solemnly to the author's word as final, but instead to ring their own variations on the printed text, these books epitomized the Bank Street view that children were best approached as full collaborators in learning."[9]

Marcus also attempts to characterize the difference between Brown's approach and Mitchell's: "Mitchell had based her model of here and now development on the outlines of the child's changing capacity for cognition and perception. Brown's first published book, *When the Wind Blew* (1937), a melancholy tale about an old woman living by herself, signaled its author's interest in exploring the emotional realm as well. In *The Runaway Bunny*, *Little Fur Family*, *The Little Island* (published under the name of Golden MacDonald, 1946), *Wait Till the Moon is Full* (1948), and *Mister Dog* (1952), Brown fashioned poignant tales of the shifting balance of the child's deep-seated

yearnings for security and independence. And in books like *Little Fur Family*, *The Little Island*, *Fox Eyes* (1951), and *The Dark Wood of the Golden Birds* (1950), she took further exception with here-and-now orthodoxy through her whole-hearted embrace of fairy-tale elements of magic and mystery."[10]

One might account for this difference in a different way: the Bank Street school operated at the level of education, of making students aware of facts and relationships within the world. Margaret Wise Brown operates, in many of her books at least, at a more philosophical and thus fundamental level: the ideas she brings into circulation are ideas about how to imagine living in a world at all, ideas about the basic attitudes one can take toward experience. These points are preliminary to any particular learning about the world.

Here is an example that might make the point. In her autobiography, Lucy Sprague Mitchell discusses a lesson she did about islands:

> I asked two children to draw an island on the board. The first one drew a wiggly round object. The second child objected, "That doesn't look like an island," and she drew some uneven hills and valleys running down on both ends to a straight line for water. I asked the first child where he was when he saw his island. "Up above," came promptly. To the same question, the second child replied with equal promptness, "In a boat." "Good," I said, and meant it. "Now both of you draw your island as a fish would see it." The children knew that the island must go down to the bottom of the sea. But how? They finally anchored their islands with a straight line going down to another straight line – the bottom of the harbor. In a big box, we made a relief map out of cement using a pilot map as base. Then we poured in water. The tops of hills became islands. The deep valley where the dredger had been working became the main channel.[11]

This is inspired conventional teaching. It conveys a geographic fact in an unforgettable way. But it is instructive to compare this lesson with Brown's treatment of an apparently similar topic in *The Little Island*. That book begins with a discussion of an island as a self-contained world, with its own inhabitants and visitors, its own seasons and changes, its own variety of appearance and mood. Then the kitten comes and puts the island in its place: "This little island is as little as Big is Big." And the island replies, "So are you." And the kitten jumps into the air, declaring himself to be "a little fur Island in the air." But then he continues, "But I am part of this big world. My feet are on it." "So am I," said the little Island. The kitten doesn't believe this and asks a fish: "How is an island part of the land." The fish

tells her she must take it on faith. "And the fish told the kitten how all land is one land under the sea. The cat's eyes were shining with the secret of it. And because he loved secrets, he believed."[12]

The same geographic point that Mitchell is making in her lesson figures also into Brown's treatment: she is giving the children facts to think with. But the fact is told in the context of conveying an image of independent and separate existence as both real and somehow not the whole story. The island can be understood as separate, as like a world in itself, with all the elements that any place has. And yet it is also part of something bigger, connected to something bigger in secret and comforting ways. The last part of the book discusses the storms and seasons sweeping over the island; the island remains stable through all this change, a part of the world.

One way to think about the relationship between Mitchell's lesson and Brown's lesson is this: in order for Mitchell's geography to really get a grip on students, they must come to see their individual stories as bound up with those of their family, their neighbors, the landforms and the waterways. As long as they see themselves as fundamentally independent of anything outside them, all geography teaching will remain a mass of distant and vaguely interesting fact—however well they learn it. It is only when they adopt an attitude that allows them to take history and geography and all the general treatments of the world seriously as being also about them that they can really be impressed by these matters. And that change of attitude, more basic than any absorbed fact, is what Margaret Wise Brown is offering children as a possibility, as an opportunity.

As philosophers, we know that most discussions rest on a broad foundation of prior agreements. We can dispute about *this* point because we share these others, without perhaps even realizing that we share them. As we work with children, we explore ever more basic material: we take less and less for granted about our common world. In this essay, I have suggested that Margaret Wise Brown's stories model those most basic choices in attitude and attention that make philosophy – and other sorts of disciplined openness to the world – possible. In offering new attitudes and approaches to beginning language-users, Brown makes possible a lifetime of particular investigation and inquiry. Her books are important tools for those philosophers working with very young children and for any philosopher trying to revisit those first moves on which the rest of the philosophic enterprise depends.

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NOTES FROM THE FIELD

Journaling Mendham

The following is a fragment of a much larger journal kept by Stephanie Burdick, a participant at the August 2004 Mendham Summer Institute, an intensive retreat convened yearly by the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children to explore the theory and practice of Philosophy for Children. Participants are encouraged to keep a journal that, according to the Institute Handbook, "draws on recommended readings" and "presents the development of your understanding of a community of inquiry and its development." What follows are the first two entries.

As the affects of dialogue whirred through my mind the past 10 days at Mendham I was struck by my utter inability to truly write anything coherent: small paragraphs, perhaps a few whimsical sentences, yet nothing of real substance. I seemed able to communicate through speech, through play, and even through gesture but not through writing. Struggling one afternoon to write a cohesive journal entry I accepted my fate as a non-writer for the duration of the conference. I changed tactics. I decided to do a modified Community of Inquiry for myself, a monologue; nevertheless, one beginning with wonder and hopefully, though perhaps circuitously, a kind of conclusion.

While writing in my journal at the retreat I free-wrote, I wondered. I created dozens of questions and wrote them all down. Some I answered immediately, others I began to answer and then was pushed into writing dozens of questions from those very answers. Sometimes it was a picture of my chain of thoughts. I kept quotes that made my mind go, buzzzz! What follows are two of my reflections. I have included the beginning spark for each; perhaps you, the reader, the other, will wonder as well.

Journal I: *"Community of Inquiry is thinking for oneself, together" (Conference Participant)*

The struggle to define the CI at Mendham was a long and arduous one. What is a CI? How do we know when we are in the midst of one, when we are leading one, when we have gotten lost and are no longer in one? Before evaluating our progress, before teaching others, there is a need to know what CI is. And yet grasping that definition is inherently tricky. As the week moved, CI morphed continuously. It is as at once both immanent and transient. It is there in the moment that it is.

The frustration many of us felt at Mendham was dictated by that lack of definition. I spent many of the first days searching various books about the purposes, the characteristics, and the confines of the CI definition. My query to define the CI led me to categorize it into a few parts; purpose, characteristics, and what-it-is-not.

CI has certain purposes. The first is to puzzle and to wonder. Puzzlement is at the very core of the process of CI.

Without the first step of questioning the query has no beginning. And it seems that that wonder is not the basic asking, for example, *how does this computer work* but more wondering *is this computer working, is it thinking,* etc. and then turning that question around and asking *what is working, what is thinking*, ad infinitum. It is the continuous contemplation of the being of and in the world. This is why we find so much of the curricula for establishing a CI and henceforth P4C centered around stories and myths, things that fascinate and move children, and us, to ponder and reflect upon the world. A second purpose of CI is to transform the problematic into a process ending in judgment—not necessarily an all conclusive and correct conclusion, but one that does bring in a certain sense of goal-meeting and final summation. Throughout the process many ideas, many opinions may have been expressed but they are delineated and taken apart and some conclusions are given. Splitter and Sharp (1996) call this the acts of procedural closure paired with substantive closure(134). It is an ending which both involves a knowledge of where the process has gone and where it might go next as well as a summation of specific points without implying correctness of answers. This moves into the third process of CI, which is to make connections while going deeper into the question. While different ideas are being expressed the CI will establish links between forms of thought, thereby turning the question around and around, exploring all its possible sides and implications. Even the ending summation should and most probably will bring about more wondering. And finally, the CI will establish continuity between reading, writing, and conversation. Even the use of familiar words will be questioned in order that the stress may be on the proper use of language. This is not to define a CI as a grammar course, and certainly slang is a part of conversation and dialogue. But our use of language, of idiom, of contextualized slang is in itself its own philosophical query. And one that is important. These literary aspects are intertwined within the purpose of a CI

At Mendham we saw many of these purposes expressed. My first steps into the retreat house were fraught with questions. I wondered at the people who found themselves at Mendham, at the significance of being alone and away from our families, and finally at our purpose in coming. We dove right into the books surrounding the P4C/CI curriculum and we were asked to find ourselves in wonder. We found ourselves asking the meaning of truth, of caring, of our very selves. The attempts to find judgments sometimes expressed themselves in anger and crisis as we found ourselves searching hard for a conclusion, for some final

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judgment which would solve the problems and questions. And we searched and made connections. We explored texts and pedagogical techniques to help us bring about some sense of clear judgment and purpose. I feel that one of the best things to come out of the Mendham experience was when people, even though it was out of frustration, would begin to make the connections between their daily lives and the questioning and wonder of the interminable sessions. Towards the end we began to make connections between our own arguments and the arguments those around us. And finally, I believe everyone struggled to become more responsible for their own speech, and to express their knowledge and logic in actual conversation.

Due to its purposes the CI does take on many similar characteristics, no matter who the facilitator is or what the specifics of the group are. The personal traits of the CI are exhibited in the respect given to each speaker so that he/she will be listened to, each point is taken seriously, any challenge to a thought is respectively expressed, and all persons contribute. The process is a stimulating one that values meaning over form. The CI must take place in a community of persons. The conversation will include meta-reflection (are we understanding? are we reasoning? are we sticking to a point? did we answer our questions?). Finally the tools of reasoning hold a significant place in the CI. This reasoning will include caring (respecting one another, attending, listening with empathy, avoiding aggression), creativity (giving analogies, imagining situations, considering consequences), and critical thinking (comparison, metaphors, logical formulations). Though we may not have succeeded in mastering all of these characteristics at Mendham they were all present in some form.

The question still arises though, what exactly is CI? It is difficult at first to distinguish it from simple conversation. But it is *not* conversation. Certainly, one can state, "I have had serious discussions where I have asked a question, made connections, gone deep into conclusions and established it within a contextual or even literary frame. We have conversations frequently that involve caring, creative, and critical thinking where all in the group equally share, with respect. But there does seem to be a great difference between a conversation and a dialogue. CI is a *form* of dialectical conversation that contains self-correction, criteria, and strengthening of judgment. It also, and this is what I find most beneficial about defining what is NOT CI, must include the actual process (the meta-CI), the establishment of someone stating, that *this is* a CI.

I am wondering if perhaps we give too much credence to the goals and meta-CI. Perhaps we focus too much on reason and we should concentrate more on the essence of the dialogue. In our struggle to find a use (to get grant money, to fund university systems, to create more need and want for the program) perhaps we miss something. Secondly I wonder if adults might be able to hold a CI without knowing it. I know from practice that CI is a difficult thing to actually be doing and the even the oldest group of adults

might not be a mature community. And yet, one afternoon, after a long CI it seemed as if perhaps the community could not give the topic up. Long after the session was finished and lunch put away members of the group discussed the topic at length underneath the bright sun of a warm afternoon. As I eavesdropped (my apologies) on their conversation I couldn't help but wonder, was this group of mature adults in the midst of a CI? Can a mature community hold a CI without it being one? I do believe that a CI can occur without an actual facilitator among a mature community. This was a group of adults very used to the form of CI and very comfortable with each other. And, due to the nature of the conversation it was a certainly focused and had a clear goal in mind. However, upon further reflection I must conclude that although mature adults can hold a CI lacking many traditional aspects it was NOT a CI. This was a philosophical dialogue. It lacked the structure that gives CI its holistic entirety. For the definitions of purpose and character traits do not equal a CI. A CI is its own, entirely. This is difficult to grasp still, my experience leads me to conclude that CI is more than the sum of its parts.

Journal II: *"There is a big question mark in the heart of a human being" (Conference Participant)*

This was such a wonderful remark that was said during our first *Pixie* CI. The tensions of the week led to much doubt. At points I really felt the desire to shout, "It will be okay…we are all mystery creatures and that is a good thing!" Recognizing P4C as a valid educational tool you must accept that children can do philosophy. If children can do philosophy then it only makes sense to conclude that adults can do philosophy as well. And we do. We ask ourselves, what is love, what is friendship? What is truth and why tell it? And, what is more, we can learn to make philosophy and reason more central to our lives.

An article by Catherine McCall (1993) led me to consider the adult reaction to children doing philosophy. In "Young Children Generate Philosophical Ideas" McCall uses the following analogy to counteract claims that children cannot originate philosophical ideas. "Just as an orchestral conductor works with the orchestra's musical skills and abilities, the facilitator of a P4C dialogue must assume, that the children arrive with requisite skills." (570). Of course, we realize that orchestral directors bring together musicians who have been practicing for years and who do know music. Children, it can be safely said, do not intentionally practice philosophy. Yet we have all been to those 5th grade band concerts where amidst the clamor and shrill notes of off-key flutes and the odd sound of a trumpet blaring we hear that recognizable tune, *Ode to Joy*. Perhaps children do not intentionally practice philosophy but they do philosophy, inherently, just as they know music and beats, somehow.

Using this analogy we are left with philosophical problems. First, where does philosophy begin? At what point

can we call philosophy philosophical reasoning? Secondly, if there is no base of reasoning or of music in the child how can anyone learn the steps of reasoning? And last, do we need that conductor to lead children into philosophical reasoning?

McCall strives to answer these questions by "providing evidence in the form of transcripts that given a certain environment, children can and do reason with philosophical concepts which they themselves originate." (570).

The transcripts are illuminating and they certainly prove McCall's point, that children do philosophy and originate reasons and reason philosophically. These are important findings and I feel them to be true. However, McCall's research is not conclusive enough. Because McCall kept the facilitator in the research we cannot be sure that children can do this themselves. She is careful to point out that children, "given the right environment," do philosophy. Does this prove children do philosophy, inherently? Perhaps it proves that children can do philosophy with a facilitator. And it shows us that within the simple phrasings of the child lie basic components of reasoning and philosophical inquiry. It does not prove, however, that children can do philosophy because it is always, naturally present in their emerging minds. It would have been far more interesting if McCall had taken transcripts of children inter-acting without the facilitator. This would have answered the question whether or not a facilitator must be present, what reasoning skills look like in nature, and if children could inherently ask philosophical questions themselves.

Still, we may be able to prove this using logical deduction, without the experience. First as children are raised by a philosophically questioning society the child will be inundated already in the language of reasoning and philosophy. Just as a child knows to construct possessive sentences, *that's mine*! Children learn to construct reason, *if I…then this*. If children are constructed this way we are still left with the question who taught the first child to ask questions? This leads us to conclude that children are not even constructed to do philosophy at an early age, that in fact, they are natural philosophers. We see this in a baby's exploration, a young toddler realizing that she is an entity, an I that "owns" a name, a family, or a toy. We see this as well in the two-year-old whose incessant questioning will keep his parents awake all night. A simple question, "why is the sky blue?' can lead us to a whole host of philosophical questions.

Still for those skeptics who resist the notion that children do philosophy spontaneously it is necessary to transcribe children's natural comments. I would argue that the children did originate philosophical ideas, yet McCall's interventions with such sentences as, "Yeah, so how would you know if something was a real person or not…or a robot that looked like a person" (574) leaves a bit of room for doubt. I would claim, however, that McCall's research certainly shows children originating reasoning skills such a relationship-connections, abstract reasoning, meta-cognitive reasoning, giving examples, and supporting claims.

I bring up this notion of doubt because at Mendham participants doubted their own ability to reason. I could sympathize if it was doubt of their ability to give the best reasoning possible—we all can be accused of circular logic, false truths, and weak examples—but not if they doubt (as they did) their ability to be "philosophical." Using McCall's research we may doubt children's ability to originate philosophy without the correct environment; but at Mendham we had a facilitator, a "correct" environment. McCall shows that we all should have been doing philosophy.

Philosophy begins with that big question mark in our hearts, but perhaps it is more difficult for adults to accept this than it is for children. Children seem to accept their questioning as natural. As adults we tend to hide from the mysteries in our hearts (we pay psychologists to find them for us). Perhaps this fear of the questions lies deep within us. Some at the conference may not have been ready to truly accept the basic tenet of P4C—the one thing I wish McCall had proven more soundly—that children do philosophy naturally. Accepting this tenet means two things. First it means that you as an adult can do philosophy—that you do have questions and that you can answer them. Secondly it means that children can think by and for themselves. As educators, even ones that extol critical thinking, this can be a scary fact. Children who think for themselves can ask questions of truth to the teacher, can impose control upon their environment, and can refuse the traditional power dynamics of the teacher/student paradigm. And so, perhaps subconsciously, some at the conference, in wanting to ease up on the philosophical nature of the conversation, needing more structure, asking to slow down, keeping the moves overt, were questioning the procedure of CI in order to exercise what little control they could to calm fears stemming from the conclusion that we, as humans, think.

Perhaps this is one of the most compelling reasons for implementing the P4C curriculum. If children learn to accept their human mystery, conceivably keeping questioning alive as adults would not be as difficult as it was for some at the conference.

There is one problem that stands out, however—the role of the special-needs child. If children all have questions and all can do philosophy what implications does P4C have for special education? With its emphasis on rational thought and logically progressive dialoging it seems elitist in its teaching model. Are special education programs included in the research of P4C? I would propose that handicapped children wonder as well. Can we as educators access this wonder? It is up to us, is it not?

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The Political & Social Ends of Philosophy

PHILLIP GUIN

Ends are often straightforward terminations: end of the game, of the affair, of life. Other significant ends manifest implications for human well being. In this way, John Dewey identifies ends-in-view as the predicted terminations of inquiry toward settlement of pressing problems. Dewey is also concerned with ends as value commitments: health wealth and power, for instance. But in view of the plurality of value potentials, he is sensitive to a distinction between the valued and that, which is valuable. Not all instances of value can stand the test of the valuable, of valuation. He turns to philosophy for evidence of the valuable. Richard J. Bernstein captures well the connection:

> The function of philosophy is to effect a junction of the new and the old, to articulate the basic principles and values of a culture, and to reconstruct these into a more coherent and imaginative vision. Philosophy is therefore essentially critical and, as such, will always have work to do.... Indeed, in pointing the way to new ideas and in showing how these may be effectively realized, philosophy is one of the means for changing a culture. (p.385)

Philosophy, then, is not for Dewey some remote undertaking disengaged from the here and now, nor can values be ascertained without reference to the problems and conditions of human life. Nowhere can reconstruction and the critical function of philosophy be better appreciated than in education, for bridging the old and new requires an engaged, capable citizenry. Even at the beginning of life, the neonate is never without context. First off, there will be a political order, institutions and arrangements adapted toward the preservation of a well-ordered society. As well, there will be a characteristic social milieu of changing conditions and challenges, new problems and issues provoking stress on existing political structures and calling for new ideas and values. For Dewey, children in the process of being introduced to these political and social dimensions will be further complemented by the overriding value of democracy. For civil discourse demands citizens prepared to join in conjoint efforts to address society's distresses and disequilibriums, while critically sustaining political stability. Philosophy and education will therefore be progenitors of political and social ends.

The above, of course, is only a synoptic view of a few salient aspect of Dewey's thought, though not one unfamiliar to Philosophy for Children (PC) practitioners. Without question, PC shares an affinity for much of this, and in particular the political and social potential of mature communities of inquiry. Philosophy and education in the service of political and social ends is not, however, a new idea, and if Walter Kohan is correct, it is a hallmark of Western education.

In his Presidential Address at the Tenth Conference of the International Council of Philosophy with Children (ICPIC), appearing in *Thinking,* Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 4-11, though generally supportive of the idea of PC, Kohan feels dissatisfaction with it in practice for, in his view, it fails to be "as transformative, as revolutionary, as radical, as it needs to be in order to make any difference in these neo-capitalistic, global times...." Leaving aside the scent of bias in these words, and after having read the address in *Thinking,* it seems to me that Walter (as a friend—I trust not erstwhile—I have chosen to use the given name) has presented us with at least three contestable judgments, which ought to be reviewed by the community of inquiry. I've couched the three in my own interpretation and hope they do justice to Walter's thought: 1) PC, as presently construed fails because it promotes a political agenda which calls for the formation of children according to arbitrary criteria, thereby constricting the range of children's thought and action; 2) PC involves a pedagogy which promotes certain abilities and cognitive tools, in effect reinforcing the standing political order; 3) PC promotes a spurious concept of thinking, one which fails to take account of the child's potential for unique philosophic experience. I would like to examine each contention, in the anticipation that others, including Walter, will at some point join the discussion.

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The Formation of the Child

One can only agree with Walter that autocratic, authoritarian regimes provide few of the freedoms most cherished by us. His example of the elitist proposals in Book 11 of the *Republic,* where power and authority devolve from the on-high edicts of philosophically prepared guardians, makes a mockery of human freedom and responsibilíty.

Most citizens in this ideal society are hardly more than automatons, and education will surely favor a few at the expense of the many. It becomes bothersome, though, to attempt further to draw an analogy between Plato's failures in the *Republic* with PC, essentially on the basis of a sketchily observed point of resemblance, namely that both have a political agenda that leads to the formation of the child. It's not unlike insisting that storm trooper and bourgeois morality are essentially the same since both claim to abet the perfection of humankind. The comparison is simply not sharp enough to bring out both relevant similarities and differences. For analogies to be compelling, substantial points of resemblance need to be adduced and examined, or if the burden rests with a few, or one, as in this case, one would think it of utmost importance to know what details are to count for the equivalent application of the resemblance. It does not seem sufficient for Walter to acknowledge that there are vast differences of detail, yet cling to the allegation that because both are political and formative of children, both equally sap education of its vitality. Certainly, in the course of political evaluation, there will be questions asked. Are all political regimes of the same persuasion in their regard for human flourishing? Can deliberative democracy, disseminated throughout politico-educational institutions come to terms with freedom and authenticity? Can there be a progressive education divorced from democratically protected political restraints? Walter leaves the comparison with these words: "While affiancing different social orders and dissimilar concepts of citizenship, education, and philosophy, both consider children, before anything else, to be future citizens of a desired political order." But what is it about the political order in the *Republic* that bespeaks failure, while PC—admittedly in the democratic tradition—has thoughtful, intelligent advocates throughout the world who see it, as it stands, as liberating and quite capable of having a significant impact on human well-being?

My sense is that differences of detail, duly acknowledged by Walter, will not make much difference to him. I think what he wants to say is that it is a fundamental error to allow philosophy to call the political shots which inevitably must lead to an education encumbering children's thought and action. There is determinism at work here which cannot help but force a resolution in favor of an extant, static political order, even one whose bottom line is democracy. Recalling Richard Bernstein's synoptic exposition of Dewey's thought above, that which makes change and amelioration possible in society is the critical deportment of philosophy. In its critical capacity, philosophy exercises judgment respecting political and educational objectives, whether there will be a call for new values and ideas. I don't think this sanguine approach is going to alter Walter's criticism of PC-cum-Dewey. Walter has forceful if idiosyncratic views concerning the nature and role of philosophy, of thinking and childhood. It's not just the formative ends of the political and social orders that bothers Walter; rather that there has been a betrayal of philosophy. This becomes increasingly evident in his further criticisms of PC, that it has an impoverished pedagogy and bogus concept of thinking.

Pedagogy and the Child

Here Walter engages PC pedagogy. In particular, he is incensed by the sanctioning of "abilities or tools" in the philosophic education of children. Since he appears to want a conflation of abilities with tools, at least insofar as perceived defects are concerned, I will stick mostly with "tools" in the following, though referring more generally to rules and principles.

Admittedly there is something about "tools" that excites thoughts of plumbing or auto repairing. Within their respective domains, tool kits in the hands of experts hold promise of the prompt dispatch of thorny problems. The use of the right tool at the right time and place proves professional competency, specialized thinking within a specialized sphere of activity. Nevertheless, as Walter points out, the right tool "condemns...to the mirrored repetition of the same." Expertise in plumbing and auto repairing will have its limit of application, limits spelled out by the parameters of their respective domains. If I understand Walter correctly, he would approve of something like this characterization of tools, in order to expose philosophy in the service of political and educational expediency. Tools are useful to thinking, but thinking constrained and limited to a finite range of possibilities, not only the mechanic's thinking but also that which unfolds in various value systems and ideas, such as the *Republic,* or PC, or ongoing social criticism under the guidance of deliberative democracy. It's not just that the products of thinking will be circumscribed by a political heritage, but that the tools themselves are part of a conspiratorial pedagogy. They have no duty independent of the resourceful preparation of children to find their proper places.

Of course there are countless tools, rules and principles—those seemingly without political intrigue—encountered in ordinary affairs. The instructor desires to teach the beginner to swim. Is the novice thrown directly into the water with the admonishment, "Now swim!"? No. There are preliminaries. Dos and Don'ts. Instruction in the shallow end of the pool. The tools here are thought of as *procedural,* adapted to swimming competency. The renowned concert artist practices scales on the morning of the evening performance. Morning scales are procedural in anticipation of an outstanding performance in the evening. No

doubt Walter would point out that these acknowledgments get us no further than before, having the equivalent and limited range of application as the mechanic's tools, procedurally no less tied to preconceived outcomes. Calling them procedural does not alter their constricted range. Will the same be true of procedural tools serving all inquiry, all cognitive ends? Are all cases of inquiry bound to explicit outcomes? There is no end to examples of circumscribed, focused and institutional thinking: plumbing, auto repair, chess games, baseball, writing a poem, and banking. The further contention, though, is that all our thinking will at some point betray our political legacy, that it is in principle impossible to think independently of that immaterial barrier. The difficulty of affirming this position is that no inquiry is allowed to stand as contrary evidence. Whatever possible counterexample might be offered, no matter how restricted it might be to the investigations of specialists, no matter how excitingly creative, it will still be held to be entailed—effectively hobbled—by mainstream socio-political life. If there is something more, something cognitively discrete and independent, Walter has yet to reveal it. Until he does, I will be inclined to proceed as though PC practice is capable of broaching unlimited lines of inquiry.

When one considers the rich diversity of mental conduct—including deliberating, believing, reflecting, calculating, intending, knowing, deciding, reasoning—it's difficult to imagine that such an army is incapable of breaking away from the alleged cognitive mold. Accordingly one might imagine preliminary conditions and cognitive tools ranging over an unlimited universe of possibilities. Enhanced procedurally, the upshot would be thinking, which is heuristic and accommodating, in the sense of providing an opening to increased meaning and understanding, without bias or need to dictate an outcome. One might further contend that, if the political order is based in deliberative reciprocity, that is in democracy, then that order is procedural with respect to an unlimited range of socio-political possibilities. And taken a step further, one might ask whether philosophic thinking—and by extension children's philosophic thinking—might possibly be aided procedurally as opposed to the "mechanized, technicized" predicated outcomes which Walter believes are inevitable. To help with these possibilities, it should first be accented that in PC it is the community of inquiry which is to be strengthened and sustained, not the political order in which the community finds its home. To be sure, the political order is grist for critical evaluation, no less than Walter's criticism of all such orders, no less than criticism of Walter's criticism. Let us examine, then, how procedural tools, principles or rules might strengthen and sustain inquiry at the most productive levels.

To begin with, no community of inquiry can adequately function without profound respect for persons as possible sources of information. Here Walter concurs: "Nobody can think alone. We think with others." Respect for persons, in this sense, has nothing to do with particular ideologies, the scope or quality of opinions voiced, geographical location, or the experience or knowledge of participants; the principle is entirely procedural. Whatever outcomes are reached, whatever consensus or new directions proposed, the principle will nevertheless retain its neutrality. Its sole cognitive contribution is to be complementary of comprehensive, cogent inquiry. Respect for persons is not a consequence of community deliberation, rather the condition for it. Similarly no community of inquiry can function without fidelity to impartiality. Every opinion, all points of view have equal claim to be heard. In turn, this allows for the critical scrutiny of the existing state of affairs, including various ideas of democracy, as well as oblique or repugnant value claims. For instance, storm trooper talk is allowed under this principle, albeit exposed by the identical principle of its odiousness: impartiality guaranteed only for a so-called racial elite. As with respect for persons, the principle of impartiality opens inquiry to an unlimited horizon of possibility, checked, of course, by other procedural demands, such as need for evidence, good reasons, counterexamples, and consistency. This last is telling. Consider a girl's confession during one of her community's investigations, that "my only consistency is my inconsistency." Her humorous internalization of this duality, her insight into her pattern of behavior, her new self-knowledge could all very well contribute to the integrity of her community, just as self-deception or continued submission to the same pattern could become a hindrance to honest inquiry. The girl's potential awakening also points to how inquiry, enhanced by procedural observance, becomes progressively able to handle the old and new. This is evinced in two significant ways: first, participants in a community of inquiry attain a heightened consciousness, becoming more alert, careful, rigorous, probing; second, as a result, consequential ideas are generated for evaluation, the old and new are unveiled so as to encounter improved criticism.

I might summarize procedural rules and principles by the following characteristics: 1) they will be applicable to help unglue thinking that has become constricted or moribund; 2) they do not themselves enter the products of thinking, solely raising the capacity for deliberation, and securing open inquiry; 3) they are value neutral, having no stake in ideology, no motive for either good or evil. One might say that, in general, procedural thinking is regulative of sound thinking. In this capacity it is unaligned, capable of bracing up impoverished while controlling redundant thinking. It has the potential to highlight both radical and conservative views. In the give and take of inquiry, a procedural approach is able to entertain the subversive as well as vivify ordinary values. Classroom communities of inquiry will offer children every opportunity to excel at thinking. As procedural activity is encouraged, its justification, from children's point of view, lies in its utility. Children come to appreciate better thinking just as they come to appreciate excellence in other areas of life, such as aesthetic understanding, friendship, or a host of developmental activities. Proficiency in procedural thinking must become an entry to

sound philosophic thinking. I don't think it an exaggeration to hold that children begin to think philosophically because they are acquiring the tools to do so.

Philosophy and Thinking: Recognition or Encounter?

And now have I rescued PC from Walter's objections? Have I properly accented its interest in philosophic thinking with children? Assuredly not, for I am as yet at variance with Walter's insights into the real nature of philosophy and its relation to thinking and childhood. I could perhaps retreat by observing that we do ourselves a disservice by attempting to descry the essence of philosophy, inasmuch as this would directly put an end to inquiry into that subject. However, it is only fair that Walter should have his due, provided that I can unravel it. There is something about some forms of contemporary German and French philosophy that doesn't want an argument, only to lay it out for consumption in continuous prose. I very much feel this way in reading Walter's exegesis of Gadamer and Deleuze. I confess that my impulse to view it as immoderate is no doubt a symptom of my own philosophic insecurity, though I've tried to give it my best shot.

If I am not mistaken, that which I have failed to grasp is the centrality of experience in both philosophy and thinking. Not just any experience, for Walter has in mind a pristine experience, uncontaminated by our historical, hermeneutical limitations. It's as though we wait patiently for a Heideggerian encounter with being, however unsure we may be of having made contact. In any event, we are confronted here with experience which is unique and *not* repeatable. Indeed, to repeat it (report it?) is to standardize it, as in a repeatable scientific experiment. It thus becomes the job of philosophical activity to capture such experiences as they are encountered in the progress of thought, while treating them with the deference of being singular. Naturally any worthy pedagogy will be one prepared to promote such encounters with children. Walter employs a litany of Manichaean contrasts—thinking/unthinkable; homogeneous/heterogeneous; possible/impossible; recognition/difference; empirical/transcendental; expected/accidental—presumably to stamp well the division between tainted philosophy and pure, unvarnished, unblemished philosophy. If one is on the right side of the contrasts, say the unthinkable, having the right disposition and receptivity, then perhaps one will encounter the unique experience of philosophic thought. The unthinkable is without precedence, predictability, even hint of a modal possibility, a clear disjunction from all historically conditioned experience. On the wrong side, however, where conventional thought occurs, we have tools, procedural rules and principles, recognition through deliberative reciprocity, a socio-political order, all caught up in the system with its defects of repetition and stasis. And, of course, suffer the children never to have the opportunity to think for themselves in any meaningful account.

Now perhaps we can get a handle on Walter's formulation of philosophy. "I assume that philosophy is an experience of thinking, and that teaching philosophy has to do with promoting such experiences." Acknowledged by Walter that the formulation is amorphous, in need of elucidation, still it does serve as a start. Since obviously not all experience is philosophic experience, not all thinking philosophic thinking, there is need to distill, in each case, that which is. The sequence seems to be this: philosophy has as its object the stated experience, while thinking's object is the unique, unanticipated, unthinkable, and so forth, of that experience. To uncover his way, Walter introduces Deleuze's maxim against the "dogmatic image of thought," whereby, out of conviction or laziness we universalize common sense, as in "everyone believes that x," or my favorite political hypocrisy, "the American people believe or want or trust that x." This is certainly common sense run amok. and when codified, throws up barriers to authentic philosophy and thought, summed up by Deleuze by such words as "conformity," "recognition," or "model"—in short, banal sameness. And it would appear that PC is thought to be similarly encumbered. The three components of Walter's formulation—philosophy, thinking, experience—are so interlaced in these descriptions that independent analysis of each defies our reach. Taken together, though, they signify a separate ontological space, one known only through their combined epistemic operations.

Whatever merit one may find in Walter's formulation, one can easily see the source of his hostility to PC practice. His tepid recognition of the ordinary claims of life is countervailed by his persistent portrait of authentic thought. Recognition "can form the basis for many things, but not of thought—if thought has to do with difference, plurality and diversity," thus forcing an impasse: Walter and compeers are in sheer contrast to PC practice. The experiences that PC stresses and deems most rewarding in philosophy, thinking, and education are assiduously degraded in the contest, and reconstruction, as Dewey and others have envisioned it, is at least once (maybe twice or thrice) removed from the elevated ontology propounded by the Franco-German philosophers. The thought that a P4C approach might find a place for human ends incorporating "difference, plurality and diversity," from Walter's perspective, simply misconstrues philosophy's authentic mission.

As for the creation of proper thinking, Walter cites "at least two crucial issues which any proposal for 'teaching to think' should consider...." First, he is taken by the old saw that 'teaching' should probably be treated as a task rather an achievement verb, that one can fish all day without catching a fish, just as one can teach all day without catching a learner. His obvious intention is once again to remind us of the solitariness of the unique philosophic encounter, just falling short of dismissing the teacher as a superfluous nuisance. Second. there are the usual strictures aimed at abilities and tools as upheld in PC pedagogy. At one point, he plunges into metaphor, suggesting that "to educate is an amorous act," insofar as it deals with newness and differ-

ence, "at the same time, a murderous act," as it brings down the old homogeneous edifice, no doubt housing PC practice. Proper thinking, in other words, must take its inspiration and direction from the prospects of the unique philosophic experience. Of most significance for me is the continuing insinuation that PC, as now practiced in many parts of the world, shortchanges children of significant philosophic experiences, as well as sustaining improper procedures for thinking. Childhood and pedagogy therefore emerge as pivotal concerns. For it does not seem to me that these contrariwise approaches to education can fare equally in providing the most favorable experiences for children.

Final Thoughts

I seem to detect in Walter's pedagogical musings a sort of overriding inconsistency. More than once we are told that we think together, "learn to think philosophically with, not from, others." All well and good, and perhaps we have here the offing of a community of inquiry. Yet the experiences that children are held to need to encounter "cannot be transmitted" and in the case of "philosophy, no one can think for another," and "philosophy as the experience of thinking is unique, unrepeatable, and nonnegotiable." We seem to require both community and singularity. Do children, then, have the encounter in concert; or does the community only prime the encounter pump for a fortunate few (presumably those who fail are lost); or are the ones having the encounter obliged to keep it to themselves for fear of recognition contamination? Walter is intent "to think a philosophic pedagogy for teaching philosophy," but it would appear necessary to get over this hurdle first. My guess is he will stumble, for any authentic philosophic experience will have to remain ineffable, in the assurance that all forms of disclosure, all attempts at intersubjectivity will automatically condemn it to the realm of recognition and hence philosophic oblivion. It would appear that one has and has not the encounter.

This brings up a much more serious concern. If I am correct in my picture of the philosophic experience, then its isolation from the contingencies of before and after renders it susceptible to possible error; there is no check of the encounter, or whether in fact there has been one. Who, then, is responsible if one orchestrates one's life on the basis of delusional experience? Walter does attempt to harbor thought in the dubious supposition that "thought is by nature right...," even though history is replete with zealotries boasting of unassailable epiphanies. As for children claiming exculpation for unbecoming behavior on the grounds of unique, one-of-a-kind encounters, they could not, as far as I can see, be held accountable.

Closely related to accountability is the question of teacher preparation. It would appear to be gratuitous in the face of the encounter. What possible aid could the teacher afford the child? Walter is emphatic: "...if thinking is an encounter, teaching to think has to do with propitiating [sic]

those encounters....No one learns what another teaches her when she really learns anything....To learn to think philosophically means to find one's own road in thinking...." So much hangs on whether the encounter can gain substantiation in the lives of children, countered as it is by a passive subject, possible/probable error and mischievousness, and pedagogical nightmares. And there can be no doubt of a passive subject, docilely waiting for enlightenment, since any proffered helps and strategies will of necessity (or default) have to come from the disavowed world of recognition. It is difficult to imagine an actively engaged child, having ownership of her thinking, yet ready to share with others as she would be in a PC community of inquiry. Granted there is perhaps a lesson here. The thought has been advanced that no teaching has been successful, no learning has taken place, unless the student has superseded all instruction, gone beyond in new and unforeseen ways. This is partially the illustration of the Meno, where the Socratic elenchus startles the boy into the sudden realization that the required figure must be constructed on the diagonal rather than the sides. It matters not at all that Socrates has the answer; the learning dynamics are the same as if the lad had solved the liar's paradox or Fermat's theorem. However, this example is not going to help Walter's position, for there is no allowance for any specific instruction—assuredly not exposure to those procedural tools of PC practice—that might bring about an "aha" experience. The problem seems fairly straightforward to me, namely, that the decontextualization of experience, in anticipation of the unique philosophic encounter, scatters away any semblance of meaning and understanding upon which we normally depend to build our lives.

In the decontextualized, otherworldly domain of the encounter, it is difficult to imagine the status of meaning and understanding. By contrast, in the contextualized world of recognition, our ordinary world of social and political life, the situation is quite different. In this language community with its recognizable forms of life, the ownership of meanings is the community's privilege. Now introduce the prophet, the oracular voice, struggling with difference, the unthinkable, the heterogeneous, totally out of any context, faced with insuperable hurdles to gain meaning and identification, for himself as well as others. Contextualization becomes his only salvation. Unless he can make meaningful contact, some mutually significant statement, he will be met at length by laughter, derision, and finally anger; his becomes the voice of a madman.

Fanciful though this may be, I hope it does bring out the dangers of a pedagogy calling for disengagement from actual sources of meaning available to human beings. And the accretion of meanings in time—history that is—should not be dismissed out-of-hand. We are now who we are because of linkage to the past and projections to the future, including our weaknesses and strengths, our numerous mistakes, our illusions, demons, dreams and ideas. To attempt pedagogy dismissive of all this is as difficult to fathom as the

madman's message.

From my "perspectival," to cop Walter's arch expression, I do not think that the issue between Walter and PC can be conclusively settled. I find Walter's approach wildly speculative, and his case against PC theory and practice will depend on the merit of those speculations. Why, then, will I not go along with them? Here I have to look to consequences for an answer, those of PC practice as it now stands, and Walter's knotty alternative and its probable consequences. Walter's attempts at pedagogy, ending with a forced image of Socrates as supreme pedagogue, reveals his thinking to have become exceedingly threadbare and unconvincing, so as to drain away any chances of accommodation with actual classroom practice. Perhaps Walter *is* capable of Socratic intervention, but most teachers will require something closer to PC training, its conditional Socratic approach, its emphasis on inquiry rather than an encounter. Walter's desire to think pedagogy for thinking philosophically becomes circular, always returning to the encounter for justification, since other consequences would involve recognition. This hardly seems suitable for children, who look to context for meaning and understanding, and whose philosophic thinking will and should reflect that scaffolding. Indigenous children in Chiapas, where I spend a portion of time, are not going to profit by decontextualized encounters; their trickster tales, drawn from their ordinary experience, are loaded with philosophic potential. Under guidance of discreet questioning, subjects as diverse as truth, personal identity, lying and death are given free expression. These children are as capable of translating their daily experience into rich philosophic insights as are their peers elsewhere in the world. Here are consequences that speak for themselves. They also speak for the efficacy of PC practice as it has now evolved.

Why this critical examination? I have two fundamental reasons: first, Walter has asked for commentary in his presidential address, and I feel obliged to give it; second, his views, I believe, pose a danger for the integrity of PC prac-tice, particularly if teachers and administrators take them as feasible alternatives for the classroom. My fear is that if they do they will shortly become disaffected and will subsequently cast aside philosophy with children. Walter has been greatly impressive with his enthusiasm, hard work, and masterly organizational skills, particularly evident in the 2nd Brazilian ICPIC. Still his presidential address bodes ill for this brilliance:

> *It was his vitality...which most impressed me...vitality so abundant that, overflowing into certain poses and follies and wildly unrealistic notions, it gave these an air of authority, an illusion of rightness, which enticed some contemporaries into   taking them over-seriously. (Carpenter, p. 66).*

Herein I think lies a danger of educators taking "overseriously" pedagogical proposals I trust I have been able to expose as unworkable. There is no canonical reason why PC should not change. New ideas, procedures, and materials do surface and are tested and adopted. There is, however, one important difference from Walter's proposals: the newness here does not dispense with a tradition reaching back to a pre-Socratic dawn and P4C's evolution within that tradition. By contrast, stripped as they are of history and context, Walter's proposals would undermine 35 years of effort to consolidate P4C throughout the world. P4C welcomes responsible change and criticism; Walter's other worldly designs, though provocative, indeed alluring perhaps, nevertheless pose contestable issues calling for the attention of the community of inquiry.

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Is it Possible to Think?
A Response to Phillip Guin

WALTER KOHAN

I must begin by saying that I consider Phil Guin to be, not just a remarkable colleague but a friend, and I am both honored and intellectually stimulated by his thorough and caring response to my Presidential Address at the Tenth Conference of the International Council of Philosophy with Children (ICPIC), 2001. I could offer a background for these feelings: first, the personal and intellectual character of the author of the response, second, its thoroughness and carefulness; third, the offer of the opportunity to enter into dialogue. After all, I did not offer such an address because I had some important truth to tell others but to provoke dialogue. I thank Phil deeply for giving such careful attention to my paper, and also for making me aware—especially in the third section of his response—of some undesirable implications of what I wrote there. My response to his response will proceed by way of offering some new elements in order to continue the dialogue.

Many options can be taken in responding to a critique. I am not going to follow one of the most common ones: I'll not discuss the "correctness" or "fairness" of Phil's interpretation. Even though I am tempted to do so (especially when it comes to passages where Phil seems to be reading what I wrote very narrowly), I have no desire to play a game whereby I would be trying to show how my paper *should* have been interpreted as opposed to the way Phil actually read it. I do not want to give the "real and true" interpretation of my paper—I do not even think such a thing exists. Neither do I not want to discuss the legitimacy and depth of his reading—a reading which, as I have already said, I very much appreciate. If Phil read the paper the way he did it is because there was something in the paper that allowed him to do so. I would prefer my response to take Phil's critique as a point of departure from which to think the challenges to the position I tried to defend in my previous paper, and to consider some new questions and problems that his response helps us to pose. I'll try to think *with* this critique in order to consider what we still have to think. There is in fact still so much to think—so many issues—

and I will be limited in this short response to only a few.

By way of searching for a context for response, I notice first of all how strongly preconceptions concerning philosophers and philosophical traditions are built into culture. It is also remarkable to me how some traditions do not seem to dialogue with one another and how we have formed strong and closed judgments concerning some philosophers, sometimes without even reading them. An obvious example is the difficulty many philosophers formed in the Anglo-North American tradition have in dialoging with European non-English traditions, as well as the contrary. To pass over this kind of firmly pre-conceived judgment, I will avoid any philosophical references in this response. In this way I hope to help its readers to focus on what I say and not on the references I use to support what I say.

From the three points enumerated by Phil as a summary of my presentation, I will concentrate on the issue of thinking—which, in a sense, intersects with the other two. I agree that thinking—in philosophy and education as well as any other human activity—is historically conditioned. I do not consider that thinking should have as an object something abstract or separate. The "unthinkable" about which I wrote is also very concrete: it is what could not be thought in any given context and, with a movement in thinking, can be thought in a new context. In this sense the movement of philosophical thinking is, precisely, to create a new context for thinking, to create new conditions to think what could not be thought in the given ones. This is why I think philosophical thinking is revolutionary and transformative, because it helps us never to accept the actual context of thinking—it continues and recreates again and again new contexts for thinking.

I also think that thinking is always perspectival. And it is precisely because it is contextual and perspectival that the notion of thinking in an impartial way is an illusion. There is no privileged place where someone could place herself outside of contextualized thinking; it is always a thinking context in which we find ourselves and think what we think. And it is this which makes of the notion of *"the"* community of inquiry an abstraction, an idealistic illusion. There might be contextualized communities of inquiry, but it is also an abstraction and an illusion to speak about rules and principles of "the" community of inquiry that are "value

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neutral." In what context does this assertion work? If it is to work in any context, then it is as if it had a non-contextual supercontext, which claims to be absolute, natural, abstract. If it works in a "democratic" context, then why shouldn't we make it explicit? Why pretend that it's neutral? The move is a familiar one: we pretend that "our" (an idealized "our") context is "the" context. Isn't this too abstract?

Nor am I sure about the usefulness of Phil's "tools" metaphor for understanding what thinking is and what it can be. The tools (together with the principles) are said to be neutral, and it is argued they do not enter the product of thinking. I am not so sure. First, it is not at all clear to me that they are neutral. How could we say, for instance, that such value-laden ideas as "respect" or "democracy," as mentioned by Phil, are neutral? How could it be argued that they are a condition of thinking if we can find so many counterexamples where people think in a non-respectful or non-democratic way? Or are we going to argue that they are not thinking just because they do not think following the principles we would like them to follow, or they do not reach the kinds of conclusions we would like them to reach? I think it would be less pretentious to say: "My point of departure is this socio-political set of values: democracy, understood as so and so, respect, understood as so and so, and so on with other values … in *my* community of inquiry, we cannot think without this bases." I think it would be more intellectually honest to say that as philosophical educators or educational philosophers we aim at certain social and political goals, which are founded on a certain social and political basis. But the pretension that this particular agenda is *the* agenda, and these particular goals *the* goals seems to me to be non-philosophical, non-educational and—to use a word for which Phil might have a preference—non-democratic. It is non-philosophical because, posited as neutral, universal principles, these goals are put beyond question; it is non-educational because such principles put obstacles in the way of others (educators, children, whoever) finding their own beginnings; it is non-democratic because it is one particular, contextualized, historical beginning taking the place of any and all beginnings.

Let me try to say the same thing in other words: the "tool-product" image makes it possible to say that creativity and the new will always be products of the tools of thinking, which in turn implies that the latter are not thinking itself, but before thinking—natural, universal, unquestioned. The tools are not thought because they are already there for every human being to think with. Creative thinking cannot affect them, since it is their product. In this sense the tools are outside history, outside thinking itself. Curiously enough, they are characterized as forming the conditions of thinking, yet at the same time they are what thinking does not think. In fact like any other human creation, the tools of thinking are born in a given moment of history and acquire conditions of legitimation, transmission and productivity as a result of historical and social conditions which hide their

historical contingency in a naturalized, universalized image. Politics is always previous to logic. There is no un-political logic. Every logic is constructed on political principles. I use "political" here in the sense not of a government or of a given regime of power but of a set of power relationships without which no logic is possible.

Secondly, I do think that the "procedures" enter the "products" of thinking. Certainly, they do not enter them as a body enters a room, but I cannot see how it could be ignored that the tools that are used to produce thinking condition its products. If it is so clear that we need to foster these tools in every human being, then why should we deny that what is thought has something to do with the tools used to produce such thoughts?

To summarize my position on the issue of thinking—i.e., to say something I consider relevant to the question "what does it mean to think?"—I would say:

(1)   I agree that the "tool-product" image is a workable and relevant image of thinking; I am not against someone acquiring such tools; for example, I agree it could be helpful for a child to know to give counterexamples, to predict consequences, to give reasons, etc.; but

(2)   I do not agree that this image is neutral from a socio-political perspective. The pretension to neutralize and universalize this image turns it into an axiom; it is assumed as an unquestionable principle, a kind of naturalized image of thinking, a sort of universal reason every human should have, just by virtue of being human; and

(3)   I have many doubts about the usefulness of this image of thinking from a philosophical and educational point of view; therefore, I am trying to think other beginnings for thinking, that avoid such a "tool-product" image;

(4)   Some possible characteristics of an alternative beginning might be: contextualized, non- universal, concrete, perspectival, communal (i.e., not in solitude but with others), non- hierarchical (i.e. avoiding categories like "correct-incorrect," "higher order-ordinary," "proper-improper," "authentic-inauthentic") thinking; as we will see below, this does not mean that all thinking is the same, undifferentiable or homogeneous;

(5)   A beginning for philosophy as questioning (not *the* beginning) might be posited under the following principles: *unconformity, attention to singularity,* and *sensibility to otherness*. To question what should not be questioned; to continue questioning when nothing seems to deserve new questions; to seek always to create new opportunities for thinking; to become aware of questions we have not thought of making; to avoid one-dimensional thinking; to stress neither the particular nor the universal, but the singular (the particular is the individual, the singular is the unique); to pay attention to any thinking as if we were thinking for the first time—i.e., to foster an encounter with the other, paying close attention to what has not yet. been thought;

(6)   This notion of the beginnings of thought introduces new "criteria" for appreciating thinking which are not normative, but aesthetic and political. There is no need for a

natural, universal principle to guide the thinking of politics and aesthetics. There is thinking and thoughts that can be stronger, more interesting, more beautiful than other thinking and thoughts, but these considerations do not make them "better" or "worse." I try to avoid—and especially with children—normative distinctions, simply because the normative can come—if needed—from the other in the end, not from us in the beginning.

Now let me consider the example which Phil offered in order to demonstrate the efficacy of philosophy for children—the indigenous children in Chiapas, Mexico. I would certainly like to know more about Phil's and PC's experience with those children. Imperialistic versions of philosophy designed to help others—especially when the other is the oppressed, the excluded, the ones deprived of all education, health and economic conditions necessary to live their lives, like most of the indigenous children in Chiapas—might have a noble appearance and might be supported by very good intentions. PC presented as the new catechesis will soothe our conscience and will let us sleep in peace: we have done our Sunday service. But it is naive and unfair to these children to sell them the illusion that by adopting our tools and values, which are the very ones which have accompanied their exclusion and oppression, they will find any kind of real liberation. Now, after 500 hundred years of dealing death to this other, we approach them and say "Welcome to our land of philosophy, come think with us. We use tools based on those same values which underlie the system that has oppressed you until now, but we are doing all this for your own good. You just need to be like we are, think with our tools, use our procedures, believe in our values, ask the questions we ask, philosophize the way we do, and you'll be liberated from our oppression." Hopefully they are not so oppressed that they believe us. How calming it is to believe that we are "doing our job" with them; how it soothes the conscience to build an image of the value-neutral efficacy of PC—and how ethnocentric it is to say that they are capable of rich philosophical concepts. But what if we were less preten-

tious, and purposed to hear, not what we are prepared to listen to and to acknowledge, but a really different voice? What if we could make philosophy help them—and not us—decide what questions they need to ask, what thinking they need to think, what philosophy they need to philosophize? But no—we are generous and sophisticated colonizers: we are doing all this in the name of philosophy and democracy. God save us!

What touches me most in Phil's response to my paper—and is perhaps directly related to the paternalism which I sense in his references to the indigenous children of Chiapas—is not so much its content as the spirit underlying it, the tone, which is especially evident in the final remarks. The most important message of his critique seems to be something like this: "Hey, you practitioners of Philosophy for Children, there is a kind of virus out there. Be careful!!! Do not believe those prophets of experience, thinking and philosophy. Their proposals are abstract, dangerous, unworkable, and even seductive. Please, keep with our well-known program and method." Certainly, Phil is not closed to change and not tied to a canon. But criticism and change have their limits, and therefore there must be some guardians who will tell educators—who, it is assumed, cannot discover it by themselves—the correct and incorrect ways of developing PC. The tone of Phil's conclusions combines those of a guardian, a priest, a legislator, and a policeman of ideas: he is there to maintain order in the world of PC. It does not seem to me to be the tone of a philosophical and educational enterprise, but of an institutionalized dogma. Is that a really attractive position to be taken by an educational philosopher or a philosophical educator? Why all these efforts to speak in the name of others? Let the others (educators and children, especially when they are the *very* other, like the indigenous children of Chiapas) speak for themselves. Let us avoid as best we can using them as examples to confirm what we think and we want everyone else to think.

I have limited these pages to a few themes underlying Phil's critique. There are so many others. On the one hand a number of pedagogical questions arise from the image of thinking here affirmed: is it possible to teach another person

to think? If it's possible, is it possible in a school? If it were possible to do it in a school, what form would it take? Is there a method for teaching thinking? Which one? If it were possible, how should we prepare ourselves and others to teach thinking? What in fact is the relationship between teaching and learning to think? Is it possible to learn to think in a school? How? And so on. Whatever answer we give to these questions, I personally want them to be coherent with the image of thinking affirmed by the theory and practice of an educational philosophy. The "tool-product" image asks for a program which develops the tools required to foster increasingly critical and creative thinking. What kind of strategies might be demanded by a *non* "tool-product" image? Once again, we can and should avoid dualistic and simplistic answers like "it is our program, manuals and novels or a return to the ostracism of philosophy in the schools"; or "it is the classroom community of inquiry or authoritarianism"; or the philosophical novels which "we" write or just literature. Fortunately, there is always more than one road in human life. And there is still a long road to travel in the construction of an educational philosophy—or a philosophical education—with children. As I see it, other emerging images of thinking, philosophical experience, teaching and learning promise to strengthen PC, not weaken it, unless it insists on maintaining the one-dimensional image already settled upon.

I have no problem in affirming a paradoxical (not inconsistent) image of the relationship between thinking, philosophy and education. It could not be otherwise, given the paradoxical nature of the human condition. Socrates is a good example. In the paper which is the object of Phil's critique I emphasized just one aspect of the figure of Socrates. I pointed to him as an outstanding image of a philosopher. I agree that his image as a pedagogue is not so stimulating. Not only in the *Meno* but in all of the so-called aporetic dialogues of Plato, Socrates does something very unpedagogical: he dialogues with the others, not to search together, but rather to arrive together at the point he already had arrived at himself before entering the conversation. The theorem of the diagonal in the *Meno,* or the knowledge of one's lack of knowledge in the aporetic dialogues are prime examples. In the former, he already has the mathematical understanding to which he leads the slave; in the latter, he is already convinced that the highest human knowledge is philosophical knowledge, and that is the direction in which he pushes all of his interlocutors.

Socrates is not as interesting as a pedagogue because he does not enter into "real" dialogue—he does not seem particularly open to the otherness of the others. Rather, he persistently enters into conversation to confirm what the Oracle has said: that he is the wisest of the Greeks because although he does not know just as the others do not know, at least he does not think—as the others do think of what they know—that his knowledge is worth much. In this sense, Socrates is the image of the anti-pedagogue. In his pedagogical relationships he never learns anything he did not

know at the beginning, and that is the one and the same thing that everyone needs to learn: what Socrates already knew at the beginning. There is no transformation allowed in his pedagogical venture, other than the one and the same transformation he wants everyone to experience.

So in fact I do not think that teachers should convert themselves or their students into Socrates. Furthermore, I do not think that teachers should convert their students into anyone or anything. And this is probably where I find myself furthest from Phil's perspective and the dominant bias of PC which he expresses so clearly: I resist what I understand as the pretension to "convert" children (and teachers) into something different from what they are. I do not like this religious metaphor for education, and I think it is time to have done with it.

I have already claimed that there is a strong tension, a paradox (not an inconsistency) in the relationship between education, politics and philosophy. I do not consider it interesting for philosophy to act as a vehicle for any political value whatsoever, simply because all political values should be the object of philosophical criticism; no political end should in itself remain unquestioned. At the same time, philosophical questioning *itself* is not neutral in terms of social and political values and we, as educators, would not be interested in introducing philosophy if at the same time it did not contribute to the sort of political movement we would like to introduce into the world. Why, indeed, would anyone introduce philosophy into the schools if not in the interests of a "political" agenda?

It seems to me that the presence of philosophy in schools or as a part of any other educational enterprise will always have this paradoxical form, and the question I've just presented is philosophical—which means, open, contestable, polemic. I am not sure of the answer, and I would like to suggest that any kind of response which takes a position on one side of the question would suffer from its lack of response on the other. To be more concrete, as I have argued in this response, I am not ready to agree that the practice of philosophy should be conditioned by any kind of predetermined value; on the other hand, I would see no reason to take philosophy to schools as I do in theory and in practice if I did not think that this project would not play a role in the gradual emergence of a less totalitarian, unfair and ugly world.

To accept the paradoxical condition of philosophy in the schools might cause us some discomfort, but it might also help us to think. It might, for example, help us to be less worried about what *we* think children think and to pay more attention to what children – and the other "others" in culture – really think. Meanwhile, we might be helping children to find, through the encounter with philosophy and education, a powerful way to decide what they want to do with their lives, no matter what we adults think about it. Philosophy for Children—if only for its thirty-five years of effort—deserves this opportunity. And children deserve it too.