

**The 'Poem' as Beginning for  
a Community of Inquiry**

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## **Abstract**

This research examines the Philosophy for Children (P4C) program and teaching about emotions. It highlights how I composed a fantasy text for 10-12 year-old children to facilitate philosophical discussion about emotions and their relationship to making judgments. It also addresses Transactional Reader Response theory, and examines how an aesthetic stance when reading this fantasy text can be used as a starting point for the process of a community of inquiry. By combining Transactional Reader Response theory and Philosophy for Children teaching methods, children are provided with an opportunity to obtain insights into self and others through an exploration of their felt experiences with the text.

**Dedication**

For my little love

## **Acknowledgments**

Over these past two years, many people have helped me along the way to creating this thesis. My thanks go out to my committee members. To Dr. Michelle Forrest, whose patience, gentle humour, and positive criticism helped me give shape to my ideas. To Dr. Susan Walsh for reading my work, providing me with useful insights, and helping me break my creative energy loose through free-writes.

I am also grateful to my family. To my mother who has provided me with love and support from a world away. Whatever strength, determination, and focus I possess come from her. To my best friend who kept my mug filled with steaming green tea during those long days and nights of reading and writing. Last, but not least, hugs and kisses for my daughter who has been an endless source of inspiration and wonder throughout the course of this challenging and most exciting academic adventure.

## Introduction

As a child I would spend countless hours reading diverse stories from around the world. The books I would bring home were my wisest companions. The stories that I came to cherish opened up my imagination to new and exciting possibilities. Through story, I could feel like a slithery mermaid darting through the freezing depths of a mysterious ocean. I could cackle like a creaky hedgewitch soaring and swooping through the air on my trusty old broom. Or I could move like a puffing green dragon, stealthing through an enchanted forest as I scanned the perimeter for lunch. Through story, I also came to make sense of myself, and I developed an understanding of where and how I fit into this interconnected web of life. But I am not the first person to have discovered the magic of story.

For thousands of years, story has been used as a device through which various cultures have passed on knowledge from generation to generation. There have been approaches to story which are didactic with aims to teach children about the “moral of the story.” Some stories have been used to develop literacy ability specific to comprehension, while others have been approached as sources of pleasure and entertainment. Story has also been used as a vehicle to facilitate dialogue so that good reasoning habits can be practised and cultivated; for example, Plato and Augustine were two great thinkers from the past who used story to illustrate philosophical concepts. When I came across ecological feminism<sup>1</sup> (ecofeminism) and read Karen Warren’s short story about care and

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<sup>1</sup> Just as there are many feminist perspectives there are also numerous ecofeminist perspectives, including, but not limited to, liberal ecofeminism, social ecofeminism, socialist ecofeminism, radical ecofeminism, spiritual ecofeminism, and animal ecofeminism. These varied ecofeminist perspectives not only reflect different schools of feminist thought, they also reflect different interpretations of the nature of and solutions to current environmental crises. Although not every loosely defining boundary of ecofeminism is taken up by all ecofeminists, what is always agreed upon is that there are important connections between the

the environment, I developed a renewed interest in story. It was then that I began to wonder how I, as an upper-elementary school teacher, might use story as a resource for an inquiry into the development of values. The reason I chose values is because I was troubled by the stories I had been reading in the news, stories about racial and cultural intolerance, violence towards women and children, the gradual deterioration of our planet, and stories about armed conflict. As a teacher, I understand the school system as a microcosm of larger society. The values that we impart to our students within the educational setting are what they take with them when they leave us. After all, is it not our values that give shape to the world we live in?

Warren's (1996) story about a rock climber illustrates different attitudes and behaviours an individual might hold towards the natural environment, in this case, a mountain. She attempts to do this by setting up a comparison between when the narrator of the story (the climber) is dominating non-human nature (the mountain) as a climber and when the climber conceives the relationship between herself and non-human nature as a friendship, as a caring relationship. Warren (1994, 1996) claims that narrative (story) holds the potential to highlight ethically germane issues and questions; it can also show the reader what an environmental ethics of care looks like and feels like to a moral agent, something that a discussion of abstract philosophical concepts might not achieve on its own.

Although Warren's piece was inspiring, I found that a short story did not provide enough clarity to make the language of ecofeminist values intelligible to a younger audience. This view is expressed by Roger King (1996) who points out that although the

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domination of women (and other human subordinates) and the domination of non-human nature (see Warren, 1994; Warren, 1996a, 1996b; Sturgeon, 1997).



notion of “care,” for example, may have been conceptualized in other ecofeminist writings, Warren’s story does not clarify what care actually means. So, for this thesis I am concerned with how I might use a lengthier fictional text for values education. I had been working on a fantasy novel aimed at the Grade Six level, and I decided to use it as a starting point for this endeavour, but I was unsure about how to proceed with regards to writing children’s fiction for the purpose of encouraging discussion about values.

Some months later, I came upon the Philosophy for Children program. Philosophy for Children (P4C) introduces children from K-12 to philosophy in an attempt to develop their ability to think more reflectively, critically, more reasonably. P4C also aims to nurture in its students a disposition that is open to exploring alternative ways of perceiving things. When I refer to doing philosophy with children, I am thinking of Ann Margaret Sharp’s (1992) description. Sharp writes:

[Philosophy] entails good questioning, paying attention to the details of one’s experience, dialogue with others, open inquiry, recognition of one’s ignorance, and a willingness to follow the inquiry where it leads. It involves the child in a growing commitment to careful reasonable deliberation with others, living a life that is judicious, searching, and honest. It also involves a care for the procedures of inquiry, other persons, and the environment around us. (p. 46)

P4C also looks at the relationship between thinking and socio-cultural contexts that are relevant to a child’s life. These aims would seem to be relevant to classrooms with respect to mediating amongst an increasing diversity of worldviews, as well as relevant for the development of critical thinking. What was of primary interest to me, however, was the way in which P4C used story as its “vehicle” for moral (values)<sup>2</sup> education.

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<sup>2</sup> In the P4C literature, as well as the literature from writers such as Pardales, Vokey, and Vitz, the label “moral” education is used to refer to what I understand as values education. My preference is to use “values” education; however, I will refer to them synonymously throughout this thesis.

During this time, I began to read the literature on thinking about thinking, and I learned that making judgments is part of the larger process of decision-making. Judgments are also a part of the process we use when we develop our values. I will expand on this in Chapter One. With the notion of thinking about thinking in mind, I started to wonder how I might embed in my fiction writing cues to facilitate philosophical discussions about concepts such as judgment and decision-making. I envisaged that a focus on values would be facilitated through classroom discussions once students had grasped how to identify judgments and decisions and their relationship to each other.

I also came across literature that explores the relationship between our judgments and our emotions, but it was not until I read about Transactional Reader Response theory as articulated by Louise Rosenblatt that I began to look at doing philosophy with children through story in a different light. Although P4C had developed a thorough curriculum geared towards the development of both formal and informal reasoning, it had not laid out how to approach reading the text under inquiry from an aesthetic stance. Briefly, an aesthetic stance refers to a response to a text whereby the reader is mindful of what is being “lived through in relation to the text *during* the reading event” (Rosenblatt, 1985, p. 124). Such a response comprises the felt experiences that are evoked from the reader’s memory, including the images, thoughts, emotions, and feelings that she might bring to the reading. Rosenblatt (1968, 1978) suggests that an aesthetic approach to reading holds the potential to provide a bridge to uncovering assumptions, biases, and beliefs (which are implicated in our values) that the reader may not have been aware of previously.

With regards to the P4C program, although the curriculum does include an education of the emotions, the community of inquiry does not seem to incorporate an

aesthetic<sup>3</sup> stance when reading as a starting point for discussion. With this in mind, the purpose of this research is twofold. Firstly, I will explore how I might compose a fictional text to encourage philosophical dialogue in the classroom, because doing philosophy with children has been shown to develop thinking ability, and because values education falls under the umbrella of philosophical inquiry. For this purpose I will use the P4C stories and instruction manuals to guide my fiction writing. Secondly, I will speculate on how I might incorporate into the traditional P4C format an aesthetic stance when reading this fictional text. The questions that guide this philosophical inquiry are: What is the thinking and writing process I use as I compose a fictional text for the purposes of doing philosophy with children? How might I use an aesthetic stance when reading this fictional text to begin a community of inquiry? The significance of this research lies in its ability to provide upper-elementary school teachers with insights into various methods of doing philosophy with children. It also holds the potential to inform the P4C moral education component, specifically its focus on an education of the emotions.

This thesis is separated into six chapters. In Chapter One, I will look at why story is a suitable resource for inquiring into values with children. I will consider how judgment plays a key role in the decision-making process and in the development of values, and I will highlight how judgment is linked to our emotions. In Chapter Two, I will offer an overview of the Philosophy for Children program. I am especially interested in looking at the process of a community of inquiry, as well as the role of the teacher in the facilitation of philosophical discussion. I will also look at how P4C frames an education of the emotions. In Chapter Three, I will investigate Transactional Reader

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<sup>3</sup> In saying this, I do not intend to set limits on an aesthetic response as one that consists of only emotional responses. An emotional response is but one aspect of an aesthetic response to a text.

Response theory. I will focus on how one might read a text from an aesthetic stance. I will also address how an aesthetic stance holds the potential to facilitate discussion on biases, assumptions, beliefs, and values, which are concerns of Philosophy for Children. This will be followed by Chapter Four entitled “Gaia-1: 2052,” the opening chapter of my fantasy novel (*Shieldwolf Dawning*).<sup>4</sup> Chapter Five includes a discussion about my thinking and writing process as I composed my fictional text to include cues that might facilitate philosophical inquiry. In this chapter, I will also look at how I might use excerpts from “Gaia-1: 2052” to facilitate a community of inquiry that begins with an aesthetic stance. The final chapter (Chapter Six) summarizes this philosophical inquiry and considers implications of the research for teaching practice.

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<sup>4</sup> I have been working on *Shieldwolf Dawning* for several years and have completed a rough framework for my first draft. For my doctoral work, I intend to develop the text into a philosophical novel that can be used for doing philosophy with children in an upper-elementary school setting. Only the opening chapter of the novel is included in this thesis.

## Chapter One

### Story and the Development of Values in Children

#### *Introduction*

The literature on the importance of story as a resource for values education is voluminous. In this chapter, I will consider psychological perspectives as well as educational and philosophical perspectives. I will also look at the similarities between how we understand our everyday experiences and how we understand the structure of stories, the use of stories for an education of the emotions, and how all this relates to an education about values. The first half of this chapter examines why story is a suitable resource for the development of values in children. The second half is concerned with exploring the concept of judgment as a part of the larger process of developing values.

#### *Story and Values*

Story has often been used interchangeably with narrative. There are scholars who seem to make distinctions between the two concepts, while others do not. Throughout this chapter I will refer to authors who use the terms “narrative” and “story” synonymously; for example Ricoeur, Pardales, and Vokey. My purpose here is not to explore at length what story is. For this thesis, I will use the term “story” as a concrete narrative product, as a representation of how people perceive things, and as an imitation of life. I also understand story as comprising an internal structure of beginning, middle, and end that develops over a period of time (see Egan, 1986; Leitch, 1986; Rankin, 2002). The distinction I make between story and narrative is that story is representational of narrative in concrete form with a beginning, middle, and end; for example, literature, a painting, or a play. When I

use the term “narrative,” I am using it to refer to a process of the imagination, as a way of understanding oneself in terms of a continuous sequence of images, impressions, and ideas. In this capacity, I understand narrative as a mode of consciousness, as a mode of perceiving my world (Rankin, 2002). Story, then, seems to incorporate the narrative process in the sense that there is an interrelationship between narrative as a mode of consciousness made concrete in the form of a story.<sup>5</sup>

The practice of using story as a method of introducing students to alternative worldviews is discussed by Lamme, Krogh, and Yachmetz (1992) who claim that stories can allow students to see the world from other perspectives. Children (especially at younger ages), they suggest, generally have a strong interest in themselves. Young children tend to view the world from their own perspectives and can have difficulty seeing other points of view. As they get older, they begin to look outwards more—they might look towards their school or the larger community. In this respect, stories play an important role when introducing children to a world beyond their immediate lives. “When they encounter thinking that is different to their own thinking children can see that there are many ways of looking at the situations” (p. 13). Stories can offer connections between the child’s own experiences and the experiences of others. For example, the authors explain that as children hear and see how characters in books behave and why they behave in this way, they can compare those actions to their own, or they can learn to place themselves in the role of the protagonist in the story being discussed. They can also learn to predict how the protagonist might act, or they might explain how they would act if they were in the story themselves and why they would act in that way.

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<sup>5</sup> Although I consider story here as a concrete form, a point was made by Dr. Susan Walsh (November 13, 2008) that “storying” can also be a process for making sense of experience without incorporating a concrete form. She attributed this method to oral cultures.

Michael Pardales (2002) also supports the claim that story (he uses the terms “narrative” and “literature”), whether oral, written, painted, expose us to scenarios we may not face in our everyday lives. Stories enlarge our experiences with moral issues. According to Pardales, novels draw the reader into the lives of the characters: when the characters face a moral dilemma, so does the reader. In this sense, story offers opportunities to engage in questions about moral experiences. Story also lets us to explore the consequences of decisions over an extended period of time. It allows us to reflect on the “particularities” that make up our moral experience, and it invites us to develop our perception of character and expand on our understanding of what is important in a situation. Literature, to Pardales, “involves us with the narratives of others. We are able to assess their actions, decisions, emotional states and the rich particularity of their lives” (p. 434). When we read diverse stories, the experiences we have via the experiences of the characters in the story increase our knowledge about life in general. So stories, Pardales claims, are suitable vehicles for moral education. To build on story as a resource for moral education, Pardales suggests that by reading literature, followed by discussion about the text, children are provided with the possibility of developing an ability to make moral decisions that are based on sound judgments.

From a psychological perspective, Paul Vitz (1990) asserts that morality in children is primarily expressed in action and is rarely verbalized in the language of abstract principles. He affirms that story provides the necessary context from which to explore the more abstract philosophical notions contained within the dialogue of moral education. He adds that a suitable method of introducing children to the “moral life,” short of actually placing them in morally challenging situations, is to have them hear,

read, or watch morally challenging stories (p. 716). He also claims that it is from interaction of characters and experiences that moral behaviour and understanding emerges. Vitz writes:

. . . this use of stories is found not just in the West, but wherever people have passed on their moral and cultural heritage to their children. The use of stories is one of the few universal aspects of moral education. From such unanimity it seems reasonable to conclude that stories have substantial educational utility. (p. 717)

To Kristjan Kristjansson (2000), stories serve as tools for “self-definition, self-clarification, and socialization” (p. 10). He promotes the use of stories that will reinforce morally fitting emotions and kind deeds, or driving home the moral of the story.

Kristjansson explains that discussion about these stories and embedded morality has the potential to expand a child’s “moral vision” through reflection on the story and exchange of individual perspectives. Josephine Russell (2002) also looks at the self-reflective properties of stories in her study on moral consciousness. Russell draws on the work of Kieran Egan who discusses these properties. Egan claims that children are greatly helped by narrative context when engaging with abstract concepts. Locating the story within a child’s personal experiences, he suggests, “engages the child in learning about living and dying, good and evil, truth and falsehood. It is a way of preparing the mind for self-reflection” (p. 143).

To move along this thread of story as a tool for self-reflection, the interplay between reader and text as a method of experiencing one’s “I” world is explored at length by Paul Ricoeur. Ricoeur (1991) argues that through the act of reading there is an intersection between the world of the text and the world of the reader where the reader is invited to perceive things from other points of view. The relationship between reader and



text is one of meaning-making. To illustrate the relationship between reader and text as a self-interpretive relationship, Ricoeur states:

Refiguration by narrative of self-knowledge which goes far beyond the narrative domain in that the self does not know itself immediately, but only indirectly, through the detour of cultural signs of all sorts, which articulate the self in symbolic mediations that already articulate action, among them the narratives of everyday life. Narrative mediation underlines this remarkable aspect about knowledge of the self as being an interpretation. Appropriation of the identity of a fictional character by the reader is one of its forms. What the narrative interpretation properly provides is precisely “the figure-able” character of the individual which has for its result, that the self, narratively interpreted, is itself a figured self—a self which figures itself as this or that. (p. 80)

To Ricoeur, narrative identity (self) of the reader arises from the interplay between reader and text. I understand this relationship between reader and text as one that is ever-evolving. Story (narrative to Ricoeur) can be transformative when it draws our attention to aspects of the world that we have not noticed previously. In this sense, the relationship between the text and reader is also one of “revelation” and “transformation.” This relationship between text and self is similar to a central idea of Transactional Reader Response theory. During the act of reading, Louise Rosenblatt (1968, 1978) maintains there is a “transaction” that occurs between reader and text when the reader is in the moment of reading. Such a transaction is explained as a “live circuit” whereby the reader brings to his or her interpretation of the text a collection of past experiences, biases, beliefs, and so on. Here, the *other* of the text and the *I* of the reader become interconnected in some capacity. This event can be transformative as an individual moves from an emotional response to a text to a rational understanding of self, including emotions, beliefs, and values, through reflection and discussion after the reading event. I will explore Transactional Reader Response theory with more detail in Chapter Three of this thesis.

To extend the notion of a meaning-making relationship between reader and story, Ricoeur (1991) suggests that each reader's individual identity intersects with the identities of the characters in a story. He claims that we make sense of narrative identity (self) in a similar manner to how we make sense of the identity of characters in a story. In the case of stories, we begin to understand the characters through the plot, how the plot ties together what occurs to the characters, what their goals are, the choices they make, their actions (see also Dauenhauer, 2005). This interaction of self and text is also addressed by Mark Johnson (1993) who claims that our lives ultimately have a narrative structure. Through story we can come close to seeing and participating in the reality of life as it is experienced and lived. Stories, then, have enormous potential for helping us make sense of our world and our experiences of it. In this respect, Ricoeur (in Dauenhauer, 2005) proposes that narratives (stories) have ethical dimensions; they present characters in a way that evaluations of their actions form part of the meaning of the events. Narratives (stories) ask us to evaluate their characters in the same manner. Johnson (1993) also addresses the ethical dimensions of story. When we read a story, he claims, we become engaged with the characters in terms of entering their lives—they perform “acts of deceptions, decision, and criticism.” He writes:

We find ourselves judging of a character that she shouldn't have done X, or wishing he had seen a particular situation differently than he did. We want to stop the characters and tell them, “Oh no, don't do *that!*” or “No, that's not what she meant.” Just as in life, we find ourselves surprised by what happens, or disappointed in ourselves for not having seen something earlier. We explore, we learn, and we are changed by our participation in the fiction that creatively imitates life. (p.196)

This view is supported by Pardales (2002) who claims that novels draw the reader into the lives of the characters. When the characters face a moral dilemma, so does the reader. This “heightened moral perception” is an important step in the process of moral

judgment. The increased knowledge people obtain from being exposed to these different scenarios better informs the processes of moral judgment. Before I continue with moral judgment, I will explore the concept of judgment and the role it plays in the development of values in children.

### ***Values and Judgment***

Pardales (2002) claims the process of judgment making is important because the consequences of our actions impact our day-to-day lives and the relationships we have with our communities. As part of this community, we have developed a set of values about the world which affect our judgments, and vice-versa. In this community, we are taught from an early age about societal norms. We learn these values from our families and friends, from various cultural groups of which we are a part, and we learn about these values in school (see also Johnston, 2007). For instance, we know if we steal we might get caught, or we know that we might have to face consequences if we choose to bully another student. We make decisions based on these values and judgments every day. Sometimes making a judgment can be as simple as which shirt to buy. I would factor into my decision the cost, the colour, how many times I would wear the shirt, and maybe whether or not it was in fashion. At other times, making a judgment might be more complex. For example, if I were to discover the company that produced the shirt held a record of environmentally unsound practices, would I still consider buying the shirt? In this respect making judgments varies in difficulty depending on the context surrounding the issue at hand. According to Pardales (2002), making moral judgments can be difficult when the moral agent encounters conflicting internal values.

In his work, *How we think*, Dewey (1933) makes note of the point of view that the whole process of thinking consists of making a series of judgments that are related to one another enough to support each judgment in leading up to final judgment: the conclusion or the decision. He then goes on to explain judgments as “units in reflective activity” (p. 119). Dewey sees judgments as links on the chain of reflective thinking, as subordinate units within a larger process. Reflective thinking is like a succession of things thought about that involves a sequencing of ideas, a consecutive ordering of ideas that is processed in a way that determines the next idea as its previous idea’s proper outcome. In other words, each outcome refers back to the previous thought. “The successive portions of a reflective thought grow out of one another and support one another...The stream of flow becomes a train or chain” (p. 4). In any reflective thought, Dewey adds, there are “definite units that are so linked together that there is a sustained movement to a common end” (p. 5). In this capacity, I understand him as presenting judgment as a linear process.

Dewey (1933) also suggests that at the centre of a good habit of thought lies one’s ability to pass judgments “pertinently” and “discriminately.” He highlights the central characteristics of judgment by exploring the concept of judgment as it was originally applied in terms of authoritative decisions in legal matters, as in the role of the judge. Dewey explains there are three features of judgment here. First, there is a controversy that consists of opposite claims regarding the same situation. Second, there is the process of defining and elaborating on these claims, and evaluating the facts that support the claims. Third, there is a final decision which serves to provide closure to the controversy. This closure can also serve as a rule for settling future disputes. The “hearing” of the controversy, then, involves weighing alternative claims. Regarding the

process of evaluating competing claims, he proposes there are no specific rules; it is all contingent on good judgment. Here good judgment requires “a sense of the relative indicative or signifying values of the perplexing situation, to know what to let go of as no account, to know what to eliminate as irrelevant, what to retain as conducive to the outcome; what to emphasize as a clue to the difficulty” (p. 123). Further, judgment possesses two functions: analysis and synthesis. Through judging, Dewey maintains, confusing data are cleared up and fragmented facts are brought together. The clearing up he calls analysis, and the bringing together he calls synthesis.

According to Lipman (2003), the outcomes of critical thinking are judgments. Judgment also concerns the forming of opinions, estimates, and conclusions; thus, it comprises elements such as problem-solving, decision-making, and learning new concepts. He writes:

*Judgments* are settlements or determinations of what was previously unsettled, indeterminate, or in some way or other problematic. We can say that *inquiry* and *judgment* are generally related to one another as process and product, but the connection is not an exclusive one; some inquiries do not terminate in judgments, and some judgments are not the products of inquiry. Typically, however, the products of inquiry sum up and express the appraisive character of the inquiry process. (p. 23)

Taking a slightly different approach to Dewey, Lipman seems to present judgment as a non-linear process. He illustrates his conceptualization of judgment as a wheel. He explains that judgment comprises three orders, including judgments of identity, judgments of similarity, and judgments of difference. Each of these orders, in turn, can comprise other forms of judgment ranging from judgments of composition to judgments of relevance (pp. 279-89). Further to this, Lipman (2003) makes a distinction between mere judgment and good judgment. When we consistently make judgments well, we can be said to have good judgment, and we can be said to behave wisely. Good

judgment “takes everything relevant into account, including itself” (p. 211). Good judgment, then, is a process which requires skills of philosophical inquiry to exercise well. In today’s environment, the ability to make good judgments is important, especially when it comes to making reasonable decisions and forming values about the environment, women’s, children’s, and animal rights, and other social justice issues.

### ***Good Judgment***

The notion of good judgment is also taken up by Thomas Yos (2004) who argues that good judgment is more than a faculty;<sup>6</sup> it is a complex set of abilities. To have good judgment, he says, is not to possess the faculty of good judgment but to be able to properly perform the process through which a good judgment is made. The possession of certain abilities is an important aspect of good judgment. However, to have the ability to make good judgments is not sufficient. Integral to good judgment, Yos explains, is the exercise of good judgment. He adds that this exercise in good judgment does not need to be unflinching, but it must be consistent. Ability, he further adds, must be coupled with disposition, and one must also have developed the habit of making good judgments. Habit, Yos claims, is the inclination to act in a certain way. “One who is in the habit of judging well is one who tends to perform consistently (but not necessarily invariably) those moves through which judging is done” (p. 10). As a result of consistency of action, the individual makes the process of making good judgments a part of her character. In addition, the individual possesses the desire to engage in these habits consistently. An individual who consistently exercises good judgment is an individual who

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<sup>6</sup> I understand the term faculty here as, “One of the several ‘powers’ of the mind, variously enumerated by psychologists: e.g. the will, the reason, memory, etc.” (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 1989)

characteristically judges well, and judging well is a process of “thoughtful choosing” (p. 10). Further to this, Lipman, Sharp, and Oscanyan (1980) claim that judgment is “the link between thinking and action.” Children who have good judgment are unlikely to perform “inappropriate or inconsiderate actions” (p. 15). In the process of developing habits of good judgment, one can encourage children to give reasons for what they say, uncover assumptions, and provide examples and counter-examples.

Daniel Vokey (2001a) addresses the process of uncovering internal biases and assumptions in his consideration of judgment making as a part of moral education. To Vokey, moral education involves “all deliberate efforts to promote moral maturity,” which he explains as the ability to make sound practical judgment. I understand the term sound practical judgment as synonymous with the notion of good judgment expressed by Yos. Practical judgments, to Vokey, are choices amongst alternatives in a concrete context, and practical judgments can be influenced by moral values. Vokey makes a distinction between practical judgments and moral judgment inasmuch as moral judgments attribute moral value to something which makes the thing “morally right or morally wrong, morally good or morally bad” (p. 2). He asserts that practical and moral judgments take place on a “horizon corresponding to a moral point of view” (p. 2). Moral points of view are the sets of beliefs that condition our practical and moral judgments. Moral points of view generally include implicit or explicit beliefs about what should count as morally valuable. Further, “A moral point of view may thus be heuristically defined as the set of beliefs, attitudes, interests, norms, and priorities that would, if known, help explain why we choose and act in the way we do” (p. 3). According to Vokey, practical and moral judgments are shaped by “beliefs, attitudes, interests, norms, and priorities that influence and in turn are influenced by the practices in which we

engage” (p. 2). He adds that our decisions and actions are generally consistent with the background assumptions that constitute our moral standpoint.

Vokey (2001b) also suggests that the principles or values that are considered relevant to practical judgment are dependent on how the situation under inquiry is interpreted. In this respect, perception is crucial to practical judgments because problems “do not come ready made,” rather, they are the result of how we *see* or *frame* certain situations. He goes on to highlight research that explores effective professional judgment. This research, he notes, indicates that the expertise of the individuals dealing with concrete situations lies in their ability to define problems more than in their ability to find solutions. He adds that research also suggests these experienced professionals have success when choosing problem-definitions because they have a large repertoire of different *frames* through which these various situations can be interpreted. Vokey argues, “The larger our repertoire of different ways of ‘seeing’ situations as instances of particular *kinds* of situations, the better our chances of finding one that will afford an appropriate and effective response” (p. 263). One way we can increase “our repertoire of frames” for interpreting situations is through hearing stories. Stories can help us learn what responses are suitable for particular situations; for example, listening to folk tales and reading novels can help the individual “enhance the sensitivity of their pre-reflective moral perception” (p. 264).

Further, our ability to act in a particular way is partly a matter of interpreting (or seeing) that situation in the proper light, which in turn is also a matter of responding with a suitable kind and degree of emotional response. Vokey claims that there are two aspects to this educational process: certain emotions must be “evoked” and linked to certain situations, and stories can illustrate whether evoked emotions are appropriate by showing



their connections to decisions and actions that might lead to positive or negative consequence. Stories, then, serve to inform dispositions by showing the behaviours of exemplary characters when faced with certain dilemmas. In this respect, the reader might identify with and seek to emulate the characters. So, helping us learn the responses that are suitable for certain kinds of situations is another way stories can promote sound practical judgment. Vokey goes on to suggest that stories have the potential to promote sound moral judgment by appealing to a process of the imagination. Stories, he claims, can appeal to the power of the imagination to help the process of deliberation that comes with perception in practical judgment. In Chapter Five, I will explore how an aesthetic stance can be used to explore perception in judgment in the context of doing philosophy with children.

Along similar lines, Pardales (2002) argues that moral judgment is connected closely to moral imagination, and stories can “cultivate” moral imagination. Pardales adds that moral imagination is a psychological faculty that allows us to explore various possibilities for our lives and make sense of complex moral situations; however, he does not elaborate on the concept of “faculty.” To Pardales, moral imagination belongs to the imaginative activity of mental exploration, which allows us to realize various possibilities.<sup>7</sup> Moral imagination is moral because a primary concern of the individual engaged in moral decision making is with evaluating the possibilities he or she considers good or bad, right or wrong, and so forth. Therefore, the process of moral imagination is central to one’s ability to develop sound moral judgment inasmuch as moral imagination

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<sup>7</sup> Pardales (2002) draws on the work of John Kekes to highlight other activities of the imagination, including the formation of images, resourceful problem solving, and the falsification of some aspects of reality (p. 426).

is like a playing field where the moral agent can enact different solutions to a moral dilemma. Pardales envisages a corollary relationship between moral imagination and the process of making moral judgments. He maintains that a cultivated moral imagination increases the underlying knowledge that informs our process of making moral judgments. A developed moral imagination, he argues, also heightens our ability to recognize morally relevant situations. On the other hand, an uncultivated moral imagination will have fewer resources and result in making moral judgments that are based on less information, and thus likely to be “less significantly informed” (p. 435).

Pardales (2002) digs deeper to identify some components of moral imagination. These are prototypes, metaphor, narrative, and moral perception. Very briefly, moral perception is our ability to recognize the “morally salient” events in our lives (p. 427). By reading stories, he claims, we are able to experience diverse scenarios that can broaden our moral perception by exposing us to various situations that we might not face in our real world experience. Prototypes, metaphor, and narrative are “sources of knowledge” for us to draw upon when we are making moral decisions. I understand these sources as knowledge banks which influence our judgments and, in turn, our decision-making process. This is in keeping with Vokey’s idea of extending our “repertoire of frames” for interpreting situations. Of most interest to me here is the idea of a prototype. Pardales explains a prototype of a moral concept as the “average of all our experiences of situations where that concept played a role” (p. 428). Individuals form prototypes of justice, or fairness; for example, based on exemplars<sup>8</sup> experienced during the course of one’s life. To use the author’s example, we begin to form prototypes of fair play from

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<sup>8</sup> At their most basic level, exemplars can be explained as “the concrete instances we encounter during training or learning” (see Pardales, 2002, p. 427).

when we are children. We play games with each other, we watch others playing games, we read rule books, we observe people breaking rules, and we see the consequences. As a result of these concrete experiences, we begin to formulate an average idea of what the concept of fair play is. This average is what we would call a prototype. Concrete experiences during the course of our lives contribute to and develop our prototype of fair play. Pardales claims that prototypes of moral concepts such as good, bad, right, wrong, fair, justice, and so on factor into the process of judgment; they influence the process of judging.

Mark Johnson (1993) claims that these basic prototypes carry the affective dimensions of the concrete situations in which they arise. Such prototypes “evoke emotions, moods, erotic desire, empathy, and a host of typical affective states that motivate our actions.” He adds that our basic moral concepts are never pure abstractions, “but are always permeated with passion and emotion that move us to action” (p. 191). This perspective is in keeping with Vokey (2001b) who discusses the affective component of story and its connections to deliberation and imagination. Vokey writes:

Through their ability both to portray temporal sequences of events and to evoke particular kinds of affective response, stories can inform decisions among alternative courses of action by describing not only *what* consequences are likely to ensue, but also how experiencing those consequences might *feel*. Similarly, imaginatively projecting into the characters of historical or fictional narratives allows us to “experience” in a safe way the consequences of decisions and actions made from different moral points of view...In thus linking emotions and action, stories play another indispensable role in developing sound practical judgment. (p. 266)

These views are also relevant to how Pardales (2002) sees the role of prototypes when discussing the process of moral judgment through accessing individual experiences of the moral concepts that might be contained within a story. Pardales states:

By recognising that our moral concepts have prototypical structure, we can consider what events have gone into the construction of our prototype; we can consider how we have acted in past instances where we had to exercise our moral prototypes, and see what result our decisions led to. In this way, our prototypes become one source of knowledge for us to draw upon, as we engage in the process of moral judgement. (p. 428)

From this perspective stories can appeal to the reader's moral imagination to illustrate new experiences, to consider alternative possibilities for moral action, which influences how we might make a moral judgment, and in turn obtain understanding on how we come to form our values. But it is not only through reflection on particular texts or ideas that the practice of good judgment develops, this habit of thinking must be encouraged through group dialogue. Pardales suggests that by engaging the reader in a community of inquiry discussion about these concepts, she has the opportunity to revise the prototypes of whatever moral concept is under investigation. I will explore the process of a community of inquiry in more detail in the next chapter.

Having highlighted the benefits of using story as a resource for the development of good judgment and values, as well as its ability to introduce the reader to other perspectives, I am left with a puzzling question. Scholars have claimed that the prototypes embedded in stories link emotions and action; furthermore, prototypes of moral concepts factor into the process of judgment, and these moral concepts are linked to emotional responses. If these prototypes indeed evoke emotions in the reader and, in turn, are linked to the process of making judgments, how are emotions addressed in the context of doing philosophy with children? Before I explore this area, however, I want to look more closely at the connection between judgment and emotions and their role in doing philosophy with children.

### *Judgment and Emotions*

Lipman (2003) claims that when we are educating children we tend to identify critical thinking with “reasoning and argumentation, with deduction and induction, with form, structure, and composition” (p. 261). He adds that we do not see how emotions “shape and direct our thoughts, provide them with framework, with a sense of proportion, with a sense of perspective, or better still, with a number of different perspectives” (pp. 261-62). To Lipman, some emotions are not simply physiological results of our judgments, they are those judgments themselves. He writes:

I suspect we feel emotions when we have choices and decisions to make, and these choices and decisions are the leading edges of judgment. Indeed, so important is the role of the emotion in thinking that leads up to the judgment and in the thinking that leads down and away from it that we would be hard put to tell the one from the other. In fact, they may very well be indistinguishable; they may very well be identical, in which case it would make perfect sense to say that the emotion *is* the choice, it *is* the decision, it *is* the judgment. (p. 271)

This view is echoed by Schleifer and McCormick (2006) who claim that emotions are a form of judgment. They argue that emotions are forms of cognition which are sometimes called appraisals, and emotions are also linked to beliefs. To Schleifer and McCormick, all emotional reactions involve approaching situations through a particular lens, so to speak. Through this lens we view a situation as either “agreeable” or “disagreeable” and “beneficial” or “harmful” in various ways. “To feel fear,” they say, “*is*, for instance, to see the situation as dangerous. To feel pride is to see with pleasure something as mine, or as something I have had a hand in bringing about” (p. 17). In other words, the emotional response we have when faced with a particular situation is a judgment of that situation. They propose that because of this role of emotions, we ought to be responsible for our emotions, and they uphold the importance of and education of the emotions. In support of such an education, they draw on

research that shows children who remain confused about their emotions (especially anger and fear) tend to engage in violent acts. They suggest that there is a need for educators to help children reflect upon and talk about their emotions ranging from basic emotions such as sadness, anger, fear, joy, disgust, sadness, to the more complex emotions such as hope, pride, guilt, shame, and jealousy. Although Schleifer and McCormick do not provide a methodology for an education of the emotions, they consider Philosophy for Children as a suitable method of exploring emotions through story and discussion. I will explore Philosophy for Children further in the following chapter.

Jenefer Robinson (1983) also explores the relationship between emotion and judgment and further explains them in relation to desire. "Some sort of appraisal or evaluative judgment," she argues, "is a necessary condition of emotion" (p.731). To use her example, whether I am in love or angry or afraid or anxious or joyful, it seems that an essential component in the situation is that I am appraising the situation in a certain way, in other words, I am making a judgment about the situation. Robinson goes on to say that in some cases when we are observing emotions that possess identical behaviours (such as shame and embarrassment) we can distinguish these emotions by looking at the different judgments that partly caused the behaviour. In this sense, emotions can be observed. However, this process of distinguishing our emotions would seem to require the ability to reason through our emotions to be able to name them. Although Robinson rejects any theory that identifies emotion and judgment, she does see emotions as having the capacity to influence our judgments. Robinson considers the claim that there are two kinds of judgments, dispassionate judgments and those which are central to emotions as valuable.

Referring to Robert C. Solomon's work on emotions as evaluative (or normative)

judgments, she writes:

...my embarrassment cannot be identical with "my judgment to the effect that I am in an exceedingly awkward situation" nor can my anger at John for stealing my car be identical with my judgment "that John has wronged me". These examples all fail for the same reason: it is possible to make the judgment without feeling the corresponding emotion. (p.733)

To explore this claim further, Robinson inquires into the distinction between dispassionate judgments and those which are central to the emotions. "Just because a judgment concerns something of crucial importance to us, it does not follow that I cannot be dispassionate about it. Thus, in a clear-sighted moment I may make the dispassionate judgment that my husband is a drunkard and a liar" (p.733). Robinson also argues that judgments are no more or less intense while emotions do allow degrees of intensity. She does note, however, that the cognitive or judgmental element in an emotion is of a special kind. First, it is not a dispassionate judgment in the sense that an object *A* has the property of *P*, rather it is a way of thinking of *A* as *P*. Second, such a way of thinking is governed by our desires (for instance, our values, interests, and goals), and it is also affected by our desires inasmuch as it shares some of the formal features of desires (p. 736). To illustrate her claim, Robinson uses the example of being in love. She suggests that she may be in love with Joe but still be able to make dispassionate judgments about Joe as ugly, or morally despicable, or boring. The judgmental element of her love, here, is not the "ground" of her love but rather it is the consequence of her pre-existing desires. To Robinson, desires are important causally in how an individual might conceive of things emotionally and may, in extreme cases, be the only cause of how one might think. So the cognitive element of an emotion is an emotional conception, as a conception of something that is determined and influenced by our desires. Emotional conceptions are linked to our

desires which are also connected in some capacity to our judgments, but emotions are not judgments.

In light of recent psychological research on emotions, David Pizarro (2000) argues that emotions play a central role in the process of moral judgment. To Pizarro, emotions affect our judgments of others. Emotions can also reflect our existing beliefs. “Emotions are not vacuous reflexes devoid of rational influence,” he claims. “Rather, emotions reflect our pre-existing concerns, such as our moral beliefs and principles” (p. 358). In turn, the beliefs we hold can also affect our emotional responses to a particular moral situation. Our underlying beliefs moderate the presence of emotions, making our emotional responses a “reflection of previous cognitive deliberations” (p. 371). Further to this, he argues that instead of hindering the process of moral reasoning, our emotional responses can help us “focus our attention and our cognitive resources to the problem at hand” (p. 358).

The idea that emotions are connected to our beliefs and our judgments (judgments form part of the thinking process that underpins the formation of beliefs and values) is also expressed by Kristjansson (2000). In his work on the didactics of emotion education, Kristjansson explains that the problem with unjustifiable emotional reactions to certain situations is not that they are “morally unfitting,” but rather that they have been irrationally formed. To give an example, he highlights how irrational “self-deceptions” can play a large part in emotions such as disgust of other races, fear of ghosts, spiders, and so on. He explores learning about emotions through story and discussion as a technique that is suited to re-orienting emotions (or refocusing of beliefs). He claims that the most powerful techniques to regulate emotions are those that encourage the student to evaluate his “emotion-beliefs” through reasoning and to re-orient them if need be (p.10).



In this capacity, stories are useful for teaching about emotions and the role they play in the development of values. With these different perspectives in mind, I accept the position that emotions are forms of judgment.

### *Conclusion*

In this chapter, I explored the benefits of using story for the development of values in children. I looked at judgment as a part of the thinking process included in the development of values. I also explored the connection between reader and text as one that can be transformative and insightful. Finally, I considered the connections between emotion and judgment. Inquiring into concepts such as judgment, emotions, and their relationship to the development of values, story as a resource for teaching and learning would require a social component; for example, the process of a community of inquiry. With teacher facilitation, stories can offer students an opportunity to explore philosophical concepts as well as develop self-understanding and, at the least, an awareness of other perspectives. In the following chapter, I will look at the Philosophy for Children program because research has shown that this program has experienced successes in the development of thinking ability in children, and because the program uses story as a resource for moral education. I will examine how the program uses story and discussion to facilitate an education on thinking about thinking and the good reasons approach to values. I will highlight the role of the teacher as a facilitator/participant in a community of inquiry, and I will inquire into how emotions are addressed in the Philosophy for Children curriculum.

## Chapter Two

### Philosophy for Children

#### *Introduction*

Once I had sketched out a basic idea of where I was going with “Gaia-1: 2052” inasmuch as the concepts I wanted to explore, I started to look closely at the teaching methods of Philosophy for Children (P4C). I began with *Harry Stottlemeier’s Discovery*. *Harry* was the first novel written with P4C aims in mind. The text is for the Grade Five/Six level, and it is the first story that introduces formal logic, which is also why I chose it. I was new to formal logic, and I assumed that if I was planning to understand doing philosophy with children as a whole I would have to understand the basics. I had two main goals. First, I wanted to see what formal logic looked like on paper, and *Harry* with its accompanying instruction manual provided a useful introduction. Second, I wanted to understand how P4C explored values (including the role of judgment) through a process of moral reasoning. Around this time, I started to incorporate into “Gaia-1: 2052” dialogue that I thought might work as cues for classroom discussion on judgment and emotions. I will elaborate on my writing process in Chapter Five. In this chapter, I aim to provide an overview of the Philosophy for Children program. I am primarily interested in how P4C uses story for moral education. I will look at a community of inquiry as a process for philosophical discussion in the classroom, and I will highlight the role of the P4C teacher as a participant and facilitator in the process of a community of inquiry. I will also consider how P4C addresses emotions with regards to moral education.

### *Overview*

Philosophy for Children (P4C) introduces children from K-12 to philosophy in an attempt to develop their ability to think more reflectively, critically, reasonably, and more openly. P4C places an educational focus on the improvement of reasoning ability, development of creativity, personal and interpersonal growth, development of ethical understanding, and development of the ability to find meaning in experience through a teaching and learning process that incorporates reading, reflection, and dialogue. P4C also explores the relationship between thinking and socio-cultural contexts that are relevant to a child's life.

The P4C curriculum was developed in the early 1970s with the publication of Matthew Lipman's philosophical novel for children, *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* (1980). This novel was inspired by Lipman's initial interest in how to teach skills of deduction to children. Although he wanted to teach children logic, he did not want to teach it in the same way it was taught at the university level. The idea of disguising logic in a children's story was suggested to him, which then led to the creation of *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* in 1969. The following year, the novel was used experimentally with fifth-graders in a local school, and became a catalyst for the creation of the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC)<sup>9</sup> and prompted the founding of a National Forum for Philosophical Reasoning in Schools.<sup>10</sup> There have been numerous P4C texts written since that time for grades K-12.

Advocates of P4C, such as Lipman (1984), maintain that children possess both the enthusiasm and the capacity to engage in philosophical thinking. "Youngsters and

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<sup>9</sup> IAPC is located at Montclair State College, Upper Montclair, New Jersey.

<sup>10</sup> The forum is located at Washburn University of Topeka, Topeka, Kansas.

philosophy are natural allies for both begin in wonder” (p. 5). Lipman, Sharp, and Oscanyan (1980) explain that since children do not have a comprehensive framework for deriving meaning from each new experience as it occurs, the experience takes on a puzzling quality and gives rise to the need to ask questions. Some of these questions can be considered philosophical; for example: *What is life? What is time? What is space?* Asking philosophical questions, then, comes naturally to children. This assumption has been questioned by John White (2001) who argues that we should not uncritically assume that children can and do philosophize. He claims that the idea that very young children can philosophize is exciting because it is counter-intuitive. He presents philosophy as generally understood to be a demanding “academic enterprise” that deals with abstract matters far removed from a child’s everyday experiences that require “a capacity for hard, continuous logical thinking” (p. 20).

With regards to how we can discern whether children are actually engaged in philosophizing, White (1992) proposes that we must first test if what theorists recount about children actually match the facts. To use one of White’s examples, when young children ask questions such as, “‘What are possibilities?’ ‘What is my identity?’ ‘What’s value?’” (p. 74), are they in fact saying what they are alleged to say? The second issue is whether the claims that children can and do philosophize are always well-grounded. White draws on an example from Gareth Matthews to illustrate this point. Matthews tells a story about Tim who is about six years old. Matthews suggests that Tim is demonstrating an impulse to philosophize when he asks his father, “Papa, how can we be sure that everything is not a dream?” (p. 73). White claims it is true that in a particular context Tim’s question might be a philosophical question “if asked by a philosophy teacher in an undergraduate seminar” (p. 74). White then asks if it follows that because

the question is a philosophical question in this context is it a philosophical question in every other context? He also asks: “How in general do we identify a philosophical question?” (p. 74).

White (1992) argues that we cannot base our claims that a child is philosophizing on simply asking questions such as these because the child may only be repeating what he or she has heard elsewhere. He argues that we must presuppose that the individual asking the question understands what he or she is saying and is asking the question with a specific intention in mind. The intention would be to clarify a topic about which the individual is puzzled or confused. “We have to say more than this,” White adds. “For not every confusing or puzzling topic is philosophical” (p. 74). Having thoughts such as these, he continues, does not mean an individual is philosophizing, rather, philosophy begins when something more is added to the mix, such as some kind of “conceptual conflict” (p. 80). Although White does concede that some children may experience a certain conflict in such situations, he maintains that “it is likely to be pretty inchoate, since to formulate the issues with any precision depends on resources we cannot expect many eight or eleven year olds to possess” (p. 81). White writes:

I am not arguing that any of this must be very sophisticated, such that, say, only those acquainted with the literature of philosophy can be said to ask philosophical questions. But something like this intention, perhaps only in a very inchoate form, must be present. (p. 75)

White then turns his attention to Mathew Lipman, and suggests that Lipman conflates reasoning and philosophizing when he claims that children can and do philosophize when they ask the question “Why?”. White proposes that when children are learning new concepts, they are often at first uncertain about how to apply these concepts.

Such remarks accompanied with the questions they might ask to clear up what they do not understand must be set apart from the comments that a philosopher might make (p. 75). White goes on to say that the P4C movement seems to suggest that if presented with the opportunity, all children would want to take part in philosophical discussion. He raises an epistemological question about how one might know that this is actually so. Further to this, White notes that it is unclear how involving the “ordinary child” in philosophical discussions might be of benefit to that child. White also states that the P4C program brings the aims of improving a child’s ability to reason, or developing certain interpersonal dispositions, under the umbrella of teaching philosophy, but he argues that they are separable from it (p. 76).

White’s position on what constitutes philosophizing leaves me confused, and I must ask myself the following questions: If I am doing addition and subtraction, yet I am so far unable to do the increasingly higher-order processes of multiplication and division, am I not still engaging in the practice of mathematics? Must I be able to demonstrate the entire process of mathematics before I can be said to be doing mathematics? Also, as I reflect on my childhood I can remember my preoccupation with the question, “What is God?” Attending a Catholic school and not quite understanding what God is left me puzzled and confused. Now that I am older, I am still puzzled by the same question. However, if I am to understand White correctly, am I to assume that [as a child] because I was unaware that this was a philosophical question, and my conceptual conflict over it was not as complex as what an adult might experience, then I was not engaging in the activity of philosophy? And now that I am better able to wrap my thinking around such a question, and my intention is more inclined towards working it out at a more complicated conceptual level, then I am doing philosophy?

White then takes another look at Matthews who considers the activity of doing philosophy with children as one that can be enjoyable. White argues that the experience of philosophy as an enjoyable activity would make philosophizing different to the experience that adults generally have of it. In my understanding, making philosophy fun is one of the aims of P4C. Changing philosophy from what it looks like in an academic setting, and simplifying it to make it more accessible to children, seems to be an attempt to nurture in children certain thinking habits that form a part of the larger process of philosophy, a process that they can develop as they move on in their schooling. Throughout all of this, White does not explain what philosophy actually is, but he does state that philosophy “often brings bewilderment, despair, painful struggles for understanding. . . Presenting philosophy to children as a fun activity may impede rather than promote any understanding they may come to have of what philosophy is all about” (p.77). I recognize that the question, “What is philosophy?” is in itself a philosophical question, and my consideration of it in the paragraphs that follow will not explain the breadth and depth of the activity as a whole. Having said this, in an effort to fill in some of the blanks and uncover what philosophy hints at as an academic enterprise, I turn to the work of Del Kiernan-Lewis who has written a primer for undergraduate students who are being exposed to the discipline of philosophy for the first time.

According to Del Kiernan-Lewis (2000), the activity of philosophizing can be separated into three sub-activities. First, there is an attempt to understand both philosophical questions and the various answers to them. In other words, prior to evaluating reasons or evidence, we must ensure that we understand what the person making the proposition is saying. Otherwise, misinterpretation might result. For example, if I were to inquire into the nature of narrative, I would first have to define what it is I

mean when I use the term “narrative.” Clarifying meaning, then, is the first sub-activity of philosophizing. Second, there is the evaluation of reasons and evidence. Here Kiernan-Lewis explains that the aim is to look closely at the evidence and arguments in favour of different answers to philosophical questions. He writes:

If philosophers throughout history have shared any trait in common, it is the tendency to wonder why a particular philosophical claim is, or should be, believed, a wonderment that initiates investigation into and reflection on the reasons offered or offerable in support of that claim. (p. 8)

Third, there is high-level theorizing. To Kiernan-Lewis, engaging in higher-order theorizing involves finding new approaches to viewing fundamental issues such as freedom, knowledge, and morality, to name some concepts that preoccupy philosophers.

To illustrate this point, he states:

They attempt, for instance, to give an account of human freedom that is plausible and defensible—that will bear up under the scrutiny of the serious inquirer into the nature of freedom. Much of this higher-level theorizing is generated by the attempt to answer questions of the form “What is the nature of \_\_\_\_\_?” For example: What is the nature of causation? What is the nature of persons? What is the nature of knowledge? What is the nature of reference? Imagination and creativity play a key role in this theorizing. (p. 9)

With Kiernan-Lewis’s explanations in mind, I recognize that White (1992) makes some pertinent observations about whether children can and do philosophize, and I agree with his claim that children might not have the capacity to engage in such higher-order theorizing at early stages of their intellectual development. But, simply because this higher-order activity is missing from the wonderings of the child, yet the child is still demonstrating inclinations in the first two sub-activities, can we say that the child is not philosophizing?

According to Ann Gazzard (2001), when doing philosophy with children, philosophy can be taken as a practice that supports thinking of various ways to perceive



or understand something; a method that allows us to look for assumptions and consequences of what we are thinking, what we are feeling, and our potential actions. Philosophy is also about developing the ability to clarify what we say and to ask for clarification from others; it is a style of reflective thinking that allows us to look at our own thinking and our patterns of thought, and to make corrections to our thinking if necessary. Philosophy helps us move our thinking from abstract to concrete and back again; it offers us the ability to look at the whole picture and take a step back from whatever it is we are inquiring into and examine it from an impartial stance. Philosophy promotes in us an open-minded attitude towards the socio-cultural factors that influence our thinking and emotions (p. 44). Equipped with a basic understanding of what doing philosophy might mean from an academic perspective and what it might mean when doing philosophy with children, I must now ask myself this: Is there any evidence that children are actually engaging in philosophical activities?

Based on what I have read so far, studies show that children are capable of doing philosophy in some form. Although the literature in this area is considerable, I will only highlight a handful. For instance, in a qualitative study on moral consciousness in a sample group of children, aged 7–8 and 11–12 years, Josephine Russell (2002) found that a dialogic process helped children develop their abilities to deduce, infer, clarify, make connections, distinctions, and generalizations. Further, she found that children are capable of differentiated moral judgment which was nurtured in the process of a community of inquiry. The skills these students developed helped them to “grapple with complex moral issues and negotiate what they believed to be the right course of action in a moral decision” (p. 144). In their work on philosophical discussion on moral autonomy, judgment, empathy, and the recognition of emotion in five year olds, Schleifer, Daniel,

Peyronnet, and Lecomte (2003) found significant progress in moral autonomy, changes over time for empathy and judgment, and emotion recognition showed marked improvement. In their comparative study of reader response and the P4C approaches in groups of children between the ages of 12 and 13, Othman and Hashim (2006) found that as well as significant developments in the enhancement of reading skills of the P4C test groups (linking language ability to thinking ability and vice-versa), these children also demonstrated examples of reflecting, rationalizing, probing, and wondering in their journal entries, all of which I would be inclined to argue are characteristics of philosophizing. In an evaluation of the P4C program for grades five, six, and seven in the New Jersey school systems, and using assessments comprised of tasks that covered both formal and informal reasoning abilities, Virginia Shipman (1983) found that students in the P4C program performed better than their non-program peers in formal and informal reasoning. Based on evidence such as this, it is reasonable to assume that children are able to philosophize, perhaps not in the higher-order capacity as White (1992) mentions, but at least on a level that holds the potential to develop into more complex thinking with scaffolding from the classroom teacher. So, the question that I must now ask myself is how might I as a teacher encourage philosophical thinking in my own students?

### ***Doing Philosophy with Children***

Lipman (1984) claims that philosophy can be taught to children from K-12, but philosophical texts are essential because they provide a concrete foundation for abstract philosophical concepts; hence, the program uses story as a resource for the development of thinking skills. Such texts are written as novels instead of as abstract textbooks. Each novel is written from a child-centred perspective and contains various ideas from the

philosophical tradition. The methodology of encouraging children to think philosophically is illustrated by the discovery approach in the novels. The children in the stories reflect on and discuss metaphysical, epistemological, aesthetic, and ethical aspects of their everyday experiences. They are not overtly taught the principles of logic but discover these principles through reflection and dialogue with each other, and through dialogue with teachers, parents, grandparents, and other adults. As well as presenting models of inquiry, the novels also provide models of co-operation and caring.

Philosophical themes are introduced in the novels in stages. The P4C program touches on philosophical themes in the beginning of the curriculum and develops these themes as broader concepts as the curriculum progresses. Some of the concepts that are explored in the texts include – but are not limited to – fairness, friendship, truth, ethics, rights, and aesthetics. The scenarios the characters in the stories experience also develop in terms of relevance to a child’s everyday home and school life as he or she gets older. What follows is an outline of how the original P4C curriculum introduces philosophy in stages from grade primary (kindergarten) to middle school (see Lipman et al 1980; Sharp & Reed, 1992):

*K-Grade One:* The curriculum for this stage consists of the novel *Elfie* with an accompanying teacher’s manual of activities and exercises. The focus at this stage is on language acquisition and the forms of reasoning that are implicit in a child’s everyday conversation. There is an emphasis placed on the intensification of perceptual awareness, sharing of perspectives through dialogue, making distinctions, connections, and comparisons.

*Grades Three-Four:* Two programs were created for this stage. *Pixie* explores analogical-reasoning and philosophy of language. *Kio and Gus* focuses on practice in

reasoning that prepare children to inquire into nature. The novels also come with an accompanying instruction manual containing suggestions for activities and exercises that build on the knowledge developed in the previous stage. This curriculum seeks to bring the children to a point where they can be introduced to the formal reasoning of the next stage. Also investigated are semantic and syntactic structures, such as ambiguity, relational concepts, and abstract philosophical notions such as causality, time and space, number, person, class, and group.

*Grades Five-Six:* This P4C curriculum consists of a novel and a teacher's manual. The focus here is on the development of formal and informal logic. The novel, *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery*, depicts models of inquiry through dialogue between children and between children and adults. The story explores the value of inquiry and reasoning, and it looks at the development of alternative modes of thought and imagination.

*Grade Six:* This curriculum consists of the novel *Tony*. In this stage children explore the underlying presuppositions of scientific inquiry. The aim here is to understand the goals and benefits of science. Lipman et al (1980) claim that children who have had the opportunity to discuss concepts ranging from objectivity and verification to explanation and causality will be better prepared to deal with the content of science courses and more motivated to engage in scientific inquiry. The instruction manual that accompanies *Tony* is *Scientific Inquiry*.

*Grades Seven-Eight:* The focus of this curriculum is on elementary philosophical specialization in the areas of ethical inquiry, language arts, and social studies. The novel used is *Lisa*, which is the sequel to *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery*. *Lisa* explores ethical and social issues such as fairness, naturalness, lying and truth-telling, and the nature of rules and standards. Other issues include children's rights, discrimination, and animal

rights. *Lisa* addresses the interrelationship between logic and morality. The curriculum also seeks to help children establish sound reasons for justifying their beliefs. *Ethical Inquiry* is the accompanying instruction manual.

*Grades 9-10:* The novel used here is *Suki*. This story is about the same group of children who are now in their freshman year in high school. *Suki* explores concepts such as aesthetics, experience and meaning, criteria for assessment of writing, the relationship between thinking and writing, the nature of definition, and the distinction between craft and art. It also looks at how to deal with writer's block. The manual, *Writing: How and Why*, focuses on writing poetry.

*Grades 11-12:* The characters in the novel, *Mark*, are high school sophomores. Mark is accused of vandalism. To discover who is guilty, Mark's class inquires into social issues such as the function of law, the nature of bureaucracy, the role of crime in modern society, the freedom of the individual, and alternative conceptions of justice. *Social Inquiry* is the accompanying manual.

As mentioned before, there are accompanying instruction manuals to give the classroom teacher suggestions for encouraging discussion when her students are unprepared with their own questions. *Philosophical Inquiry*, the manual for *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery*, for instance, is divided into seventeen chapters that correspond to each chapter in the novel. Each chapter in the instruction manual consists of leading ideas for discussion, discussion plans, and exercises. The leading ideas for Chapter One, for instance, include the process of inquiry, discovery and invention, what is thinking?, the structure of logical statements, reversing subjects and predicates (conversion), an exception to the rule: "identity statements," and how the rule of conversion applies to sentences beginning with "no." The discussion plans consists of questions related to the

novel that might facilitate discussion on each leading idea. The exercises are used to consolidate the leading ideas. To further clarify, here is the exercise for Leading Idea 8 (Harry uses his rule in a practical situation):

**Exercise: “All Sentences”**

Think up some true “All” sentences, and try to imagine a situation in which someone might reverse it. Compare that situation with the one on page 4 of *Harry Stottlemeier’s Discovery*. (Lipman et al, 1979, p.16)

With reference to using story as a resource for doing philosophy, Lipman et al (1980) maintain that most children learn to think philosophically through a process of interpersonal discussion and reflection that follows reading the text. They add that children who simply read the text but do not have the opportunity to discuss their interpretations of the text with classmates will be “deprived of a wealth of meanings that the book is capable of suggesting, but which only a discussion can bring out” (p. 65). In the P4C format, reading an episode from the novel is followed by classroom discussion. The ideas and questions that lead the discussion are taken from the students, and written on the board. This discussion is part of the larger process of a community of inquiry during which interpretation of text and Socratic discussion<sup>11</sup> takes place.

***Community of Inquiry***

A community of inquiry<sup>12</sup> can be described as a classroom environment in which students are encouraged to explore ideas philosophically as a group. This community follows a code of conduct and maintains the dictum of Socrates by following an argument to where

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<sup>11</sup> At its simplest, Socratic discussion is to follow a train of discussion wherever it might naturally lead. For an explanation of Socratic education, see Fisher, R. (1995). Socratic education. *Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children*, 12(3), 23-29.

<sup>12</sup> According to the Philosophy for Kids program, a derivative of P4C, when participating in a community of inquiry, children would typically sit in a circle so that they can see everyone and hear everyone clearly (De Haan, MacColl, & McCutcheon, 1995a, 1995b).

it leads. John C. Thomas (1992) explains a community of inquiry as conceived by P4C upholds five basic elements. He writes:

1. Involving the children in the process by starting from their interests.
2. Discussion, talking, and listening (the dialectical and social element in the reasoning process).
3. Giving and expecting reasons for what one says (the process of becoming reasonable through giving reasons).
4. Respecting oneself and others (this is the ethical dimension and is the foundation for acting rationally).
5. Thinking for oneself. (pp. 101-02)

A community of inquiry also fosters caring behaviour and its members are discouraged from making disrespectful remarks about another member's values; however students are encouraged to give reasons for what they say. Caring behaviour is also approached as a behaviour that pertains to rules of procedure. I will explore this area further later on in this chapter. On the process of a community of inquiry, Lipman (1984) states:

If some children offer generalizations others may offer counterinstances; if some voice opinions without reasons, others promptly request adequate reasons. Gradually they come to discover inconsistencies in their own thinking. As time goes on they learn to cooperate by building on one another's ideas, by questioning each other's underlying assumptions, by suggesting alternatives when some find themselves blocked and frustrated, and by listening carefully and respectfully to the ways in which other people express how things appear to them. (p. 52)

Lipman et al (1980) claim that philosophical education is most successful when it encourages and helps an individual "engage in critical questioning and inventive reflection" (p.102). They assert that we can consider the standards of good thinking as defined by rules of logic and we can apply these to any forms of discourse. They add that formal logic can help children come to understand that they have the capacity to think in an organized manner, but P4C does not encourage the use of only structured thinking

such as formal logic<sup>13</sup> because it is limited in its application. Lipman et al maintain the need for a second type of logic which they refer to as the “good reasons approach.” The good reasons approach is a method of moral reasoning that the members of a community practice in their discussions about the text. The good reasons approach seeks to highlight and evaluate reasons that are relevant to particular scenarios. The main purpose for good reasons is to evaluate one’s thoughts and the thoughts of others with regards to actions or events. Such an approach provides children with opportunities to discover how to apply structured, deliberate thinking. The authors assert that this is best cultivated through exposure to scenarios that call for a good reasons approach (scenarios revolving around moral dilemmas, for example). The authors add that P4C novels and accompanying manuals provide many examples of such scenarios. The methodology of encouraging children to think philosophically is demonstrated in the discovery approach of the P4C novels. Their ability to reason is illustrated by discussions amongst the characters. Now, discussions about particular scenarios also require the presence of a teacher who satisfies numerous criteria.

### ***The Role of the P4C Teacher***

Lipman et al (1980) claim that children can learn the process of philosophy when the teacher practices it in the classroom. They suggest a teacher who is inquisitive, and challenges students to think and produce innovative ideas. The P4C teacher is responsible

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<sup>13</sup> During a recent conversation, Dr. Susan Walsh (November 13, 2008) asked me how formal logic would work for children who are so-called “divergent thinkers,” or children from diverse backgrounds who value “other” ways of knowing. Although practice with formal logic is a part of the P4C curriculum, P4C does not encourage only the use of formal logic when thinking about thinking. I would consider P4C methods as open to exploring diverse ways of knowing. Furthermore, teaching these children about formal logic provides them with an opportunity to explore new ways to examine their thinking processes without privileging formal logic over the ways of knowing that they value.



for introducing the criteria of a philosophical discussion, which are impartiality, comprehensiveness, and consistency. She is only an authority figure inasmuch as she is the arbiter of the student-led discussion process. This teacher would not teach philosophical topics to her students, rather she would seek to “stimulate children to reason about their own problems through classroom discussion” (p.102). Her role is also to ensure that the leading ideas of each chapter are addressed, and she would take responsibility for facilitating follow-up activities. When she asks questions, the P4C teacher is not always looking for answers that she already knows, she is encouraging her students to reflect in new ways, to consider different methods of acting and thinking, to deliberate “creatively and imaginatively” (p. 105).

Philosophical discussion in a community of inquiry can be spontaneous in that the teacher might not know (and does not always have to know) what her students will think of, yet her role is to keep student discussion flowing. As children hear about one another’s experiences during this discussion, they begin to learn from each other, they begin to appreciate other points of view and other values. On the other hand, when the discussion reaches a natural end, the teacher must be prepared to guide the group to another topic. Lipman et al state:

The teacher’s role throughout the discussions is one of a talented questioner. With an eye to encouraging convergent (and sometimes divergent) lines of discussion , with a recognition that a dialogue is often open-ended and somewhat unstructured, the teacher will recognize opportunities for children to explore new vistas, just as there will be opportunities to indicate how ideas can fit together and reinforce each other. (p.104)

Lipman et al (1980) maintain that it is impossible to engage in philosophical inquiry without ethical inquiry. Therefore, moral (values) education cannot be separated from philosophical education. They offer several reasons for this, including the claim that

philosophy provides a way of thinking so that the logical aspects of a moral situation can be addressed by the student who has “learned to unravel the logical aspects of a situation and can see the need for objectivity, consistency, and comprehensiveness in his or her own approach to such situations” (p. 172). Philosophy also involves a “persistent search for theoretical and practical alternatives,” resulting in the student developing open attitudes towards various approaches to any given situation, including moral ones. Further to this, philosophy stresses that a problem situation has numerous aspects, including moral, metaphysical, aesthetic, epistemological dimensions, amongst others. As children begin to consider life situations in a more comprehensive manner, they become more sensitive to the complexity of these situations and the need to consider as many of their dimensions as possible. In this respect, the P4C teacher would be concerned with encouraging her students to see the importance of reaching sound moral judgments, in other words, good judgments based in reason. To Lipman et al, this requires the development of ethical sensitivity, care, and concern. Instead of indoctrinating children into what is moral and what is not moral according to the communities we live in, the P4C teacher would use an approach to ethics that focuses on the “method of ethical inquiry rather than the particular moral rules of particular adults” (p. 66).

Regarding religious discussions, the teacher would not criticize or seek to modify a child’s religious beliefs. Lipman et al maintain an invasion of the child’s intellectual integrity represents a lack of respect for the child. They stress that the P4C teacher must be careful that a program in philosophical thinking does not serve as a tool to undermine the religious beliefs of class members but should be one that serves as a resource through which children can learn to think for themselves. To explain thinking for oneself, they write:

...thinking for oneself involves a reflection upon one's own experience and upon one's own situation in the world. It requires appraisal of one's own values and in effect of one's own identity. It further involves a search for more and more reliable criteria so that the judgments one makes in the course of one's life can rest upon a firm and solid foundation. (p. 203)

The P4C teacher's role here is twofold. Her role is to help the child find better and more sufficient reasons for believing the things he or she chooses to believe in after reflection. Also, her role is to strengthen a child's understanding of the issues involved in holding particular beliefs. Lipman et al add that P4C helps children become aware of moral judgments rather than pressuring them into making moral decisions. Furthermore, judgment must be conditioned by moral awareness, and it is through dialogue and activities in the community of inquiry that moral awareness can occur. They state:

Students must not only be encouraged to express their beliefs as to what they consider important, but to discuss and analyze them, considering the reasons for and against holding them, until they can arrive at reflective value judgments that are more firmly founded and defensible than their original preferences may have been. Such inquiry necessarily will involve students in examining the criteria by which criteria themselves are selected. (p. 47)

To Lipman et al, challenging each other's ideas is helpful to children, including the child asking the questions as well as the child who is being challenged to provide reasons for her thinking. It is also helpful to the other members of the community of inquiry who are listening because it causes them to think about what they believe and why they believe it. The authors claim that there are three clear reasons for being able to provide reasons to support one's belief or thinking. First, it is a good thing to know our beliefs are sound because we act on them every day. Second, our beliefs may be challenged in a discussion, and we might be asked to provide reasons for them. Because of our participation in previous discussions, we may be better able to provide reasoning. Third, we may have some good reasons for believing what we believe, but they might not be sufficient to justify believing in that way.

Moral reasoning here is not confined to formal logical reasoning, it also includes informal reasoning (the good reasons approach), as well as the “rule of imagination” (p.166). Lipman et al maintain that moral problems are a sub-class of human problems in general, and it takes imagination to be able to consider the various ways of dealing with these situations. It takes imagination to be able to break down the moral dilemma into its parts, and then visualizing what might be done in this or that situation in an effort to find a suitable solution. For instance, an individual would have to evaluate alternative possibilities and ask questions; for example, what process should I take to achieve  $x$ ? Who would be affected by my actions? What are the environmental consequences of my actions? P4C holds that logical thinking can be encouraged by means of creative activity and, conversely, that creativity can be fostered with the development of logical ability. The P4C teacher would encourage imagination and creativity in the classroom through discussion and activities.

As well as encouraging children to reason about moral behaviour, P4C also provides opportunities for children to act out what it means to be moral. Exercises in moral practice are central to the P4C follow-up activities, inasmuch as they give children the chance to demonstrate how they would engage in behaviours that have a moral dimension, such as consoling, caring, advising, honouring, sharing, etc. In this respect, children have the potential to develop their character. This is especially relevant to the role of the P4C teacher in terms of highlighting how our emotions can inform the choices we make. Instead of simply talking about moral virtues, the P4C teacher’s role is to facilitate situations in which her students can take part in experiences that will offer insights into what care and considerateness are in the context of their lived experiences and their emotions. Lipman et al (1980) write:

The progressive elaboration of ideas in the classroom dialogue continues to interweave the cognitive and affective strands of experience. For example, mastery of the logic component of the philosophy program has its affective as well as cognitive rewards: it increases children's self-confidence and ability to make sense of experience...children begin to discover their own points of view as they listen to other people express their opinions. They also discover how ideas, when passionately expressed from one's point of view, can vehemently attract or repel listeners. Children slowly begin to discover that as they are able to distinguish sound and unsound ideas, a growing taste for sound ones and a distaste for unsound ones begin to emerge. That is to say, children's feelings come to be enlisted in the pursuit of intellectual understanding. (p.175)

A community of inquiry, then, includes the development of both affective and cognitive dimensions. Instead of being at odds, thought and emotion can be "induced to reinforce one another" (p.175). So, morality consists not only of emotions themselves but in the behaviour that is associated with those emotions. As a consequence, the P4C teacher would also explore the means for making ethical judgments that must be developed in children. They are such things as respect for other points of view, an ability to empathize with others, the capacity to reason consistently, the ability to imagine diverse possibilities, care and concern for others, and sensitivity to the various factors that comprise an interpersonal situation. Care and concern for the procedures of inquiry are also important objectives of the program. To Lipman et al, adequate moral judgment manifests itself in care for the procedural principles of inquiry. "What philosophy for children can best do is improve moral judgment by developing in children the techniques involved in the making of such judgments and by developing in them at the same time the love of and care for such techniques" (pp. 186-87). My concern for the remainder of this chapter is with how the P4C teacher addresses the affective component of the curriculum.

### *Philosophy and Emotions*

Schleifer and McCormick (2006) maintain that while P4C has emphasized the development of thinking and logic, it has also acknowledged the affective component of doing philosophy with children, particularly concepts such as a caring form of thinking which is central to a community of inquiry. Also, emotions such as love, fear, and hope (amongst others) have appeared in novels, including *Pixie*, *Lisa*, and *Kio and Gus*. In its more recent developments, P4C has placed an emphasis on the affective domain, as evidenced in the new materials created for the program. This focus acknowledges the need to discuss feelings, to help students reflect on their personal emotions and the emotions expressed by others. These emotions range from the more basic ones such as sadness, anger, joy, for instance, to more complex emotions such as hope, guilt, and shame. The push to address emotions is influenced by research on the causal links drawn between confusion about one's emotions and acts of violence. The prevention of violence has been an important aspect of P4C attempts to educate about emotions. Schleifer and McCormick argue that a teaching approach to emotions is necessary for children to be able to reflect on and recognize their emotions. They add that philosophical discussions with children helps them with their comprehension of at least four basic emotions (sadness, fear, anger, and joy), as well as the development of judgment.

As mentioned before, Lipman et al (1980) suggest that morality consists not only of emotions themselves but in the behaviour that is associated with those emotions. Regarding classroom discussion on emotions, P4C introduces the novel as a resource for moral education. According to Lipman et al (1980), "Using the novel as a vehicle for exposing the students to philosophical ideas has the advantage of demonstrating the affective and cognitive dimensions of life interwoven at every moment" (p. 175). They

claim that the novel offers children an “indirect” mode of communication, and children are less inhibited when they feel that their personal experiences are not the focus of attention. Through fiction, children can interpret and decide for themselves which views make the most sense to them. They add that when children find themselves reading a novel about other children, they feel more comfortable talking about the affective aspects of the character’s life experiences. Such affective aspects are integrated with the “cognitive searching” of these fictional characters for ways of reasoning that will help them make sense of their world. For example, the P4C teacher might attempt to facilitate discussions about what children who have experienced the same or similar emotions in/about a particular situation might do. The teacher would try to nurture in her students “feelings of others” (p.173). The P4C teacher would focus on making “desires more intelligent and intellectual experiences more emotional” (p.162). Further to this, although it is the teacher’s role to encourage her students to identify the links between the theoretical concepts introduced in the novel and practical life situations, the teacher would not pry or force a child to talk about personal emotions or personal life experiences in the context of a philosophy course. According to Lipman et al, this would be an invasion of the child’s intellectual integrity. The P4C teacher would attempt to provide a safe environment in which children have the opportunity to discuss their emotions with one another.

Although the recent P4C focus acknowledges the need to discuss emotions to help children reflect on their personal emotions and the emotions expressed by others, Schleifer and McCormick (2006) argue that in the original curriculum, there was little focus on helping children understand emotions themselves. The accompanying guides centre discussions upon the “contrast between appeal to emotion and appeal to logic” (p.

15). To give an example of how the P4C teacher might explore the concept of emotions, I turn to *Philosophical Inquiry* (1979), the instructional manual that accompanies *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery*. This instruction manual offers suggestions for questions the teacher might use if her students are not prepared with comments of their own about the themes and events in the text. For instance: Describe the different feelings Harry, Lisa and Mrs. Stottlemeier have in Chapter One; Do you sometimes find it hard to express your feelings to your friends, even though you want to very much? (p. 3); Are feelings in your mind? If not, where are they? (p. 43); How would you describe Harry's feelings towards Tony in this chapter? (p. 81); Would you feel the same by winning with your ideas in class as by winning on the athletic field? (p. 225); Do your best friends feel things the way you do? (p. 277). So, children can analyze their emotions and understand them more objectively. Lipman et al (1980) note, "As they develop habits of thinking carefully and critically, they reach out more systematically for factual evidence, and begin to consider alternative ways of acting, rather than basing their judgments on hearsay, first impressions, or 'subjective feelings'" (p. 164).

In more recent approaches, Schleifer and McCormick (2006) explain that P4C recognizes the need for children to understand the emotions themselves. This focus sees the need for children to discuss their feelings with each other and reflect on their emotions and the emotions of others. Lipman (2003) proposes that when teaching children about emotions the teacher has to begin by teaching them about the words used to identify these emotions and the relationships through which these emotions can be connected to other emotions, to ideas and concepts, to persons, to groups of persons, and so forth. Lipman goes on to offer suggestions for questions a teacher might ask when discussing these emotions and their relationships: What is the difference between



*bashfulness* and *meekness*?; What is the difference between *despair* and *desperation*?; What is the difference between *they loved each other* and *they were in love*?; What is the difference between *an angry crowd* and *a crowd of angry people*? (p. 133).

Based on what I have read so far, it is evident that P4C addresses the affective domain in terms of exploring the concept of emotions through story and in the questions that are included in accompanying instruction manuals. However, P4C teaching methods do not seem to explicitly encourage a community of inquiry that begins with a child's response to the text that is anchored in an aesthetic, therefore, felt experience with the text.

### ***Conclusion***

This chapter has offered an overview of Philosophy for Children, including its aims and objectives, methodology, and research findings. P4C uses story as a resource for the development of thinking skills. Such use of story provides a springboard to launch children into doing philosophy. The program has been shown to develop thinking skills via informal and formal logic, and dispositions such as respect and empathy. P4C also aims at combining cognitive and affective teaching and learning practices. It seeks to address aesthetics and emotions, but in practice emotions are discussed critically without considering the child's aesthetic experience of the text. Furthermore, the P4C program does not seem to lay out how a teacher might explore a reading and discussion process that starts with the child's aesthetic responses to the text. In the following chapter I will explore Transactional Reader Response Theory and its relevance to doing philosophy with children.

## Chapter Three

### Transactional Reader Response and Philosophy with Children

#### *Introduction*

In the previous chapter, I provided an overview of the Philosophy for Children (P4C) program. My primary area of interest revolved around the methods a P4C teacher might use when facilitating and participating in a community of inquiry. I also explored the role of emotions and their relevance to doing philosophy with children. As mentioned before, emotions are connected to the process we go through when we make judgments, and judgment is part of the decision-making process, which also affects how we form our values.

When emotions are explored with children through a P4C framework, the reading and discussion procedure begins with conceptual analysis of the text where students raise questions and ideas they might want to discuss further. From this, students would search for facts about emotions. For example, once the children's areas of interest have been recorded, and the discussion process has begun, the P4C teacher might ask questions about how a character in the story might be feeling,<sup>14</sup> or questions about how the children feel as a result of an incident in the chapter they have just looked at. Although P4C aims to merge cognitive and affective approaches to teaching and learning, it would seem that its teaching methods ask

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<sup>14</sup> In earlier P4C literature feelings and emotions seem to be used interchangeably. This also seems to be the case with Rosenblatt. When questioning children during the initial stages of a community of inquiry, I would use the terms "feelings" and "emotions" synonymously because they are likely to be understood as one and the same. As the classes progress, I would encourage children to make distinctions between the two terms. I would refer to feelings as "A physical sensation or perception through the sense of touch or the general sensibility of the body." I would refer to emotions as "a mental 'feeling' or 'affection' (e.g. of pleasure or pain, desire or aversion, surprise, hope or fear, etc.), as distinguished from cognitive or volitional states of consciousness" (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 1989).

children to recall their felt experiences with the text after the reading event, rather than encouraging them to be mindful of their emotions during the reading event and working from there. It is in this area that I find Transactional Reader Response theory relevant to P4C's moral education component in terms of an education of the emotions. This chapter begins with an overview of Louise Rosenblatt's work on Transactional Reader Response. The 'poem' is my main area of interest here, so I will consider the benefits of approaching a community of inquiry using an aesthetic stance as a starting point. I will define both an aesthetic and an efferent stance when reading a text, I will explore what an aesthetic stance looks like, and I will consider the role of the 'poem' when doing philosophy with children.

### *Overview*

Louise Rosenblatt (1968; 1978) claims that the literary work of art exists as a relationship set up between reader and text. She situates Transactional Reader Response<sup>15</sup> as a counterpoint to the work of the New Critics<sup>16</sup> who viewed meaning as fixed and located within a text. Rosenblatt (1978) proposes that meaning is dynamic, and it is the result of a transaction which occurs between the reader and the text. The concept of transaction was used by John Dewey to indicate a "reciprocal, mutually defining relationship in which the

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<sup>15</sup> McDonald (2004) explains that Reader Response approaches maintain that readers use their "lived social, political and economic reality, their knowledge of their own culture and their knowledge of other cultures to make meaning from texts" (p. 17). These diverse experiences are considered part and parcel of what readers bring to their interpretation of the text. In this process the subjectivity of the interpretation is acknowledged and encouraged, and while readers can disagree with the meanings in the text, they do this from a subjective position. She goes on to say that from a poststructuralist perspective, a result of the reader and text relationship is that the reader's subjectivity merges with the text. "When the reader's stance is at one with the reader position constructed by the literary text, the 'ways of thinking or being' promoted by the text" (p. 17) are hidden, and a critical reading of the text becomes difficult to achieve.

<sup>16</sup> According to Connell (2008), the New Critics became prominent in the 1920s. This approach to textual analysis centred on "precise, technical, objective analysis" of the text in order to give legitimacy to literary studies within the scientific arena of fields that were beginning to develop in the social sciences and natural sciences (p. 106).

elements or parts are aspects or phases of a total situation or event” (in Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 123). Transaction, Rosenblatt explains, is an ongoing process in which the elements of reading are parts of a whole, each influenced by and in turn influencing the other. In this process, there is no distinction made between objective and subjective. The line becomes irrelevant because both are elements of the same transaction, “the reader looks to the text, and the text is activated by the reader” (p. 18).

Jeanne Connell (2008) maintains that Transactional Reader Response highlights personal experience arrived at as a result of reading and reflecting on the text. This perspective stresses a dynamic relationship between reader and text that blends a mix of “personal, textual, and contextual elements as the initial phase in a process of meaning making” (p. 104). Connell adds that in Transactional Reader Response, meaning does not exist as already made or simply contained within the text or within the reader, but it arises from the transaction between reader and text. This relationship is a key point that the P4C approach does not seem to highlight when interpreting and discussing a text in a community of inquiry. Transactional Reader Response theory also considers that the experiences the reader brings to the text are as important as what the text offers; hence, this relationship takes into consideration the reader’s past experiences. For instance, when reading and interpreting a text, the reader brings to the interpretation biases, assumptions, beliefs, and values. The reader might, for example, bring aspects of her religious background and her view of society acquired through her family and community. Rosenblatt (1978) emphasizes that this organic connection between reader and text occurs as a meaning-making process that considers socio-cultural contexts. To further explain, she writes:

In order to shape the work, we draw on our reservoir of past experiences with people and the world, our past inner linkage of words and things, our past encounters with spoken or written texts. We listen to the sound of the words in the inner ear; we lend our sensations, our emotions, our sense of being alive, the new experience which, we feel, corresponds to the text. We participate in the story, we identify with the characters, we share their conflicts and feelings. (p. 270)

Central to this transactional process of reading is the concept of selective attention. To put it simply, selective attention is an activity where we can focus our attention on some things and not on others, so we are constantly choosing from amongst things to pay attention to. Rosenblatt (1978) argues that during the transaction between the reader and the text, what is brought into awareness and what is disregarded depends on where one's attention is fixed. She also suggests that possibilities for interpretation arise as a result of diction, syntax, ideas, and themes, for example. Each choice, she adds, satisfies or frustrates our expectations, thereby shaping and revising the meaning we are constructing with the text. Selection and synthesis are central to making meaning. Of this process, she writes, "A complex to-and-fro, self-correcting transaction between reader and verbal signs continues until some final organization, more or less complete and coherent, is arrived at and thought of as corresponding to the text" (p. 123). Meaning, then, comes into being and/or is reshaped during the transactional process.

In terms of valid readings of the text, Connell (2008) explains that a transactional approach rejects the notion that a valid interpretation comes from one correct meaning that has been reached by one interpretive community. A transactional approach also rejects the idea of relativism where "each and every personal interpretation is automatically acceptable" (p. 109). Connell goes on to say that because Rosenblatt rejected the idea of a generic reader for a personal reading that has been shaped by socio-cultural factors, Transactional Reader Response must also have criteria for what can be

considered a valid reading, as any literary theory should. Rosenblatt herself talks about this process of responsible reading. Connell highlights that Rosenblatt came up with three general criteria for determining a valid reading of the text: consideration of the context and purpose of the reading event, a need for the interpretation not to be contradicted by the full text, and a need to avoid any interpretation that projects meanings that cannot be related to signs on the page (p.110). Connell adds that Rosenblatt viewed classroom discussion as a method for students to reach a valid interpretation of the text. Connell compares this way of learning to Dewey's process of inquiry, which asks for engagement and defense of knowledge claims. In her description of methods of interpreting a text, Connell suggests that Rosenblatt is describing a "radical epistemological shift in the classroom that actively involves students in the process of making inferences about meaning while also rejecting the idea of certainty of knowing" (p. 110). This process of inquiry is similar to the discussion process in a community of inquiry as developed by the P4C program. With regards to how an individual might approach reading the text, Rosenblatt proposes two stances one might choose from: "efferent" and "aesthetic."

### ***Efferent and Aesthetic Readings***

According to Rosenblatt (1978), there are two stances a reader can adopt toward a text, predominantly efferent<sup>17</sup> and predominantly aesthetic (or "literary"). The reader engages in different activities during each one. The distinction Rosenblatt makes between the two approaches lies primarily in where the reader is focusing her attention during the act of reading (p. 23). An efferent stance is an approach to reading a text that is used mainly for

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<sup>17</sup> Rosenblatt (1968, 1978, 1982) uses the term "efferent" as derived from the Latin word *effere*, which means "to carry away."

the purposes of information gathering. Efferent reading occurs when the reader is looking to acquire factual information from the text, when the reader is focusing on comprehension of plot, for example. This stance, Rosenblatt claims, is the prevalent approach to literature in schools. Here, the reader's attention is focused primarily on what information will remain after the reading, such as the information I might have to extract from a text to support arguments for a debate, the solution to a problem-solving question, or the directions I must follow when I am driving from point *a* to point *b*.

An aesthetic<sup>18</sup> stance refers to responses to a text whereby the reader is mindful of what is being “lived through in relation to the text *during* the reading event” (Rosenblatt, 1985, p. 124). Rosenblatt (1978) explains that like the reader who is approaching a text from an efferent stance, the aesthetic reader must still interpret the “images or concepts or assertions that the words point to” (pp. 24-25); however, the reader would focus her attention to the felt experiences that arise from her memory, including all of the images, thoughts, ideas, attitudes, feelings, and emotions that the words and their referents might evoke in her as she is reading. To Rosenblatt, “in aesthetic reading, the reader's attention is centred directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text” (p. 25). I understand an aesthetic stance as also implying an aesthetic experience in its conventional sense, namely the pleasures and pains associated with objects and events that an individual considers beautiful, such as a sunset, or not beautiful, such as a waste dump, for example (Borchert, 2006, pp. 32-34).

Rosenblatt goes on to say that a reading event takes place along a continuum between what is predominantly an efferent stance and what is predominantly an aesthetic

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<sup>18</sup> The word “aesthetic” can be traced back to the Greek verb *aisthesthai* which means “perceive.” (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 1989).

stance. A text can be read either way, and some texts are more conducive to one stance over the other. With the notion of a continuum in mind, it is my understanding that if I am reading from an efferent stance, I can also be experiencing an aesthetic reaction (in some capacity) to the text, and if I am reading from an aesthetic stance, I can also be engaging in some kind of information gathering process. When reading, it is reasonable to suggest that there would be overlaps on the continuum, stances might shift during a reading, and what would qualify one kind of reading as predominantly one stance is contingent on the reader's intentions prior to the act of reading. For instance, if I intend to read from an aesthetic stance, my focus will be on the different things I may be experiencing during the reading event, whereas if I am preparing myself to read from an efferent stance, my focus would be on making connections in the text for information gathering purposes while not paying so much attention to the emotions and feelings I might be experiencing while reading the text. So, stance determines whether the reader's selective attention will be directed to the lexical aspects of meaning, or whether the reader's focus will be on the intellectual associations and/or emotional responses to the text that are being experienced in the moment of reading (see Rosenblatt, 1982).

To further explain the efferent stance, Mingshui Cai (2008) claims that in literary study the purpose of an efferent stance is "to retain information during reading for reflection, interpretation, analysis, and action after reading" (p. 214). To illustrate this, Rosenblatt (1980) uses the example of a lawyer analyzing a legal brief. When the lawyer is reading the brief, he would be looking for the facts pertinent to his case. Although he might experience an emotional reaction to something or another in the text as he reads it, this is secondary to his aims. Rosenblatt (1978) also offers an extreme example of an efferent stance. For instance, a mother whose child has just swallowed poison frantically



reads the bottle to discover what antidote she must give her baby. The mother wants to get through the reading as quickly as possible and retain the information that will serve her purposes. In this way, she focuses on what the words mean, the “objects, ideas, and actions designated” (p. 24). The mother’s responses to the poetry of the words are not important here. Her selective attention is fixed on collecting information she can use when she has finished reading. Rosenblatt writes:

At the extreme efferent end of the spectrum, the reader disengages his attention as much as possible from the personal and qualitative elements in his response to the verbal symbols; he concentrates on what the symbols designate, what they may be contributing to the end result that he seeks—the information, the concepts, the guides to action, that will be left with him when the reading is over. (p. 27)

As mentioned before, the distinction between the two reading stances lies in the reader’s selective attention to what is being “stirred up in the experiential reservoir” (Rosenblatt, 1985, p. 101). Rosenblatt states:

The predominantly efferent reader focuses attention on public meaning, abstracting what is to be retained after the reading—to be recalled, paraphrased, acted on, analyzed. In aesthetic reading, the reader’s selective attention is focused primarily on what is being personally lived through, cognitively and affectively during the reading event. The range of ideas, feelings, associations activated in the reservoir of symbolizations is drawn upon. (pp. 102-03)

Rosenblatt (1978) names the personal experience of the text the ‘poem.’<sup>19</sup> The ‘poem’<sup>20</sup> can be interpreted as the reader’s felt experience of the text-world. It is not “an object or an ideal entity” in the sense that it is something tangible or something with a structure set in stone; the ‘poem’ is an event in time and “happens during a coming-together, a compenetration of reader and text” (p. 12). During this aesthetic transaction, Rosenblatt

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<sup>19</sup> Rosenblatt (1978) does not use the term “poem” here as a genre of writing, rather she refers to the ‘poem’ as a “whole category of aesthetic transactions between readers and texts without implying the greater or lesser ‘poeticity’ of any specific genre” (p.12).

<sup>20</sup> I am using single quotation marks when referring to the ‘poem’ according to Rosenblatt’s definition and not when I am referring to the term in its conventional sense.

suggests that the reader does not erase her past experiences or identity; rather, the reader brings forth new experiences and creates new meanings which can be understood as the 'poem.' The 'poem' comes into being in the "live circuit" that exists between the reader and the text (p. 14) and is the result of the guidance of the text combined with what is being evoked from the reader's memory, including all of the images, the thoughts, the emotions that she might bring to the reading. When evoking the 'poem,' the reader is "immersed in a creative process that goes on largely below the threshold of awareness" (p. 52). To illustrate the concept of the 'poem,' Rosenblatt (1964) uses the example of a reading of *Oedipus the King*. She writes:

The reader will conjure up, say, the characters of *Oedipus the King*, and share in their acts, their uttered thoughts, and their emotions. But that is not all. He will also probably be aware of his own feelings of foreboding and tension as he lives through his evocation of the fate of Oedipus. Similarly, the wily Iago may be called forth with great vividness, yet the reader may at the same time be aware of strong feelings toward this character, and even perhaps be conscious of skepticism about the consistency of the behaviour and motivations with which the text permits him to be endowed. (p. 126)

Rosenblatt also uses the term "evocation" when referring to the 'poem.' Based on what I have read from both Rosenblatt and from scholars who have interpreted her work, the distinction between what is 'poem' and what is "evocation" is not always clear. To evoke the 'poem,' the reader must pay attention to the words she is reading and to the various images, ideas, emotions, and so forth, the words are conjuring within her. In this stance, the reader creates a world from the text while responding to the text at the same time. Rosenblatt (1986) explains that evocation is the object of the "response, interpretation, and evaluation" (p. 125), whereas the 'poem,' as I mentioned before, is not an object, it is not an ideal entity. In another section, Rosenblatt seems to merge the terms together. She (1986) writes:

The sound of words, their rhythmic repetitions and variations, may be listened to in the metaphoric “inner ear.” Inner tensions, sensations, feelings, and association accompanying images and ideas may color imagined scenes, actions, and characters. The experienced evocation is felt to be the poem, the story, the play, corresponding to the text. This lived through “work,” this “evocation,” is what the reader responds to as it is being called forth during the transaction, and as it is reflected on, interpreted, evaluated, analyzed, criticized afterwards. (p. 124)

It would seem that in this extract Rosenblatt is suggesting that the ‘poem’ and the experienced evocation are one and the same; however, I am inclined to separate the terms. In my understanding, the ‘poem’ is the holistic experience, it is the whole meaning-making relationship that exists between reader and text from the moment the reader begins to read up until the point of reflection and interpretation.

I am inclined to consider the ‘poem’ as similar to the transformative experience between text and identity that Ricoeur (1991) describes in his work on narrative identity (see also Chapter One of this thesis). I accept that evocation is an object inasmuch as it refers to the concrete experiences I might have with the text; for example, the textual cues that stir my senses, or the symbols on the page that have me recalling past experiences. The beginning of the process of the ‘poem’ is the evocation, which I understand as my awareness of the attitudes, ideas, and emotions that arise within my memory as a result of my transaction with the words and images on the page.

To further explore an aesthetic stance, I now turn to its potential as a method of obtaining insights into self and others from a cross-cultural (or multicultural) perspective. Introducing children to diverse perspectives is also an aim of P4C. Although I am working from within a Western philosophical tradition, I consider these methods of doing philosophy with children as having relevance to various cultures in the sense that obtaining insights into self and others are cross-cultural aims.

### *Cross-Cultural Awareness*

Rosenblatt emphasizes the role of Transactional Reader Response in the development of self and social understanding; however, the theory has had its share of criticisms, specifically in regards to its lack of critical perspective. For instance, in her work on reading for pleasure and social change, Vivian Yenika-Agbaw (1997) considers an aesthetic response to a text as one which simply resembles a personal response and is removed from critical responses such as postcolonial or critical multicultural readings. This is evident in her interpretation of Patricia and Frederick McKissack's *Christmas in the Big House, Christmas in the Quarters*. Here, Yenika-Agbaw argues that the aesthetic stance does not help readers identify social issues raised in books, nor does it encourage them to question the ideologies that inform such stories, or understand how various issues in the text might affect one's everyday life. She argues for postcolonial readings and critical multicultural readings as "alternatives" to Rosenblatt's efferent and aesthetic stances "that could extend readers' backgrounds as pleasurable readers, information seekers, and skills developers" (p. 452).

In her own aesthetic reading of the novel that describes events on a slave plantation in Virginia as slaves and masters begin their Christmas celebrations, Yenika-Agbaw focuses on "personal meanings or pleasure derived from the text" (p. 447). For example, she writes that she is reminded of her childhood on Lobe Oil Palm Estate, a plantation in Cameroon that was once run by a British corporation. She experiences sadness and wonderment about why the slave master was so cruel. She also experiences surprise at how the slaves took their treatment in their stride. Yenika-Agbaw writes:

I enjoyed reading *Christmas in the Big House, Christmas in the Quarters*, although it left me with tears in my eyes. This in essence is my aesthetic reading (personal interpretation) of McKissack and McKissack's picture book. (p. 448)

Yenika-Agbaw sees a critical stance as an alternative to the aesthetic and efferent stances, arguing that children's literature offers various readings that are not "easily captured" in these two stances. She explains that the aesthetic stance is one which "explores the feelings that are evoked as a reader undergoes a reading experience," and one which emphasizes "the personal meanings or pleasure derived from the text" (p. 447). Although I agree with her claim that in a world ridden with social injustices it is necessary to reinforce aesthetic and efferent readings with reading stances that effect social change, in my understanding of Transactional Reader Response, Yenika-Agbaw's snapshot seems to be a misinterpretation of the aesthetic stance as a whole process. Her portrayal of an aesthetic stance as one which is completely separate from critical reading seems to be in opposition to Rosenblatt's explanation of an aesthetic stance as one which not only contains aspects of critical response, but also offers an additional springboard into critical discussion about social issues. Aesthetic reading is not simply about identifying with the characters in the text, expressing a like or dislike for a particular aspect of the story, or "wallowing in self-pity or self-affirmation as readers seek validation" (Yenika-Agbaw, 1997, p. 447). Rosenblatt (1978) states:

To limit the reading process to the production of the work with the critical response as a purely subsequent activity oversimplifies the reading transaction. Even as we are generating the work of art, we are reacting to it. (p. 48)

In my reading of Rosenblatt, an aesthetic stance consists of a critical approach in some capacity. To give an example, when Yenika-Agbaw is experiencing sadness during her reading of *Christmas in the Big House, Christmas in the Quarters* I am left to wonder about the thinking process that leads up to the emotion and the emotional process that leads up to the judgment she makes to be sad. What is it about the text that is making her sad? How does she know to be sad? Where does sadness come from? These are some of

the questions I would be inclined to ask when discussing a reader's aesthetic response. This links back to the claim that emotions and judgments are connected to each other (see for example, Robinson, 1983; Pizarro, 2000; Lipman, 2003; Schleifer & McCormick, 2006) in the sense that we refer to our past experiences when we are reacting to a situation, so it is reasonable to assume that we are being critical<sup>21</sup> in some degree when we respond to a text aesthetically. Even if the perception that an aesthetic stance is only "personal interpretation" (p. 448) and does not comprise any form of critical thinking is correct, I would still be inclined to argue that the reader can engage in the act of reading from an aesthetic stance and use personal responses as a connection to critical (and philosophical) discussions. On this view, the aesthetic stance is not entirely cut off from a critical interpretation of the text, rather it is intimately connected. A critical exploration becomes a natural extension of the 'poem.'

Mingshui-Cai (2008) also rejects Yenika-Agbaw's conception of aesthetic reading as disconnected from critical reading. He explains that Transactional Reader Response is a theory of reading in that it explores how readers "read, interpret, evaluate, and criticize literature" (p. 213). Although the theory does not promote one critical perspective over another, such as a feminist reading over a postcolonial reading, for instance, it does account for a critical response as a part of the entire reading experience. Cai notes that in the literature on Reader Response, aesthetic reading is categorized in three basic modes: perception, association, and affection. In the perception mode, the reader becomes aware of what is "interesting, meaningful, surprising, confusing, or whatever catches her

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<sup>21</sup> During a recent conversation, my thesis supervisor, Dr. Michelle Forrest (15 October, 2008), questioned what it means to be critical. Although this is not the place to pursue such a line of discussion, I would like to point out that there are various definitions of critical, including the view of critical thinking as comprising critical skills as well as the critical spirit (see Siegel, H. (1997). *Rationality redeemed?: Further dialogues on an educational ideal*. New York: Routledge).

attention” (p. 216). In the association mode, the reader relates to characters, events, or any other aspect of the story. In the affection mode, the reader expresses her emotions about the events that occur in the story. Cai claims that these modes may contain elements of critical reading that can, with the guidance of the classroom teacher, lead to critical understanding of the text as a social and political construct.

Regarding Yenika-Agbaw’s aesthetic stance toward the text, Cai proposes that the responses from the modes of perception and affection actually contain “seeds” of a postcolonial reading of the book that can lead to recognizing social injustices based on race. Cai points out that implicit criticism is embedded in the association mode of Yenika-Agbaw’s aesthetic reading. For example, Yenika-Agbaw associates the plantation in the story with a plantation run by a British corporation in her home country of Cameroon. She remembers how Black African employees experienced social injustices comparable to the experiences of the Black slaves in the Virginia plantation. Cai argues that the feeling of sadness in Yenika-Agbaw’s response is an “implicit criticism” of slavery. “Although it is not like the systematic analysis of the book in her postcolonial or critical multicultural reading,” Cai writes, “it contains seminal elements for developing into a critical reading.” Further to this, an aesthetic response seems to be embedded into Yenika-Agbaw’s (1997) critical multicultural reading in terms of the affection mode. For instance, she notes that “I feel the White slave owners’ uneasiness with Dickens’s novels, and rumours about rebellion” (p. 451). With guidance from the teacher, these responses offer an opportunity to open up discussions about issues of social justice.

Transactional Reader Response does address socio-political concerns in connection with responding to literature, and although she claims that a certain level of critical response is implied in an aesthetic reading, Rosenblatt (1968, 1978) proposes that

an aesthetic reading can also serve as a bridge to understanding and rationalizing emotions, as well as providing opportunities for reading critically under the guidance of the teacher. Rosenblatt further emphasizes that through this process, readers can learn to look for and evaluate the socio-cultural influences that are embedded in their responses to literature. In this respect, Rosenblatt maintains the importance of understanding a reading event in the context of its personal, social, and cultural setting. As mentioned before, the reader brings to the text his moral and religious code and social philosophy primarily created from his family and community background. Along these lines, Cai (2008) highlights Rosenblatt's claim that these socio-cultural contexts are always individually internalized, which is why a reader's aesthetic response can be used as a "matrix" for analyzing the socio-cultural influences on the reader. Rosenblatt (1978) sees the text as holding the potential to activate elements of the reader's past experiences with both literature and life. She suggests that different aspects of the text will resonate with different readers depending on the reader's existing assumptions and experiences. In this sense, the reader's past experiences will influence her aesthetic responses to the text.

Furthermore, Rosenblatt (1968, 1978) claims that literature provides an avenue in which the ethical and moral dimensions of human action are accessible. She notes that as a result of the experiences that have their roots in socio-cultural backgrounds, readers might experience moral conflicts when discussing their responses to the text. These moral conflicts, Rosenblatt argues, would arise from the relationship with the text, including a reaction to particular themes, actions, values, and numerous other factors that might evoke an aesthetic response. For instance, a character in the story might engage in actions the reader might find morally wrong in the context of that reader's cultural upbringing.



Cai (2008) also claims that aesthetic reading is not simply a personal reading that is detached from the reader's belief system. A reader's personal response to a text may be filled with "social political implications" (p. 215). He points out that there may be times when there is a conflict between the reader's "assumptions or expectations about life" and the "attitudes, moral codes, social situations" the reader is experiencing with the text. He explains that as the reader is not ideologically innocent, her responses to literature, "inevitably reveal beliefs, values, assumptions, and attitudes that derive from a certain ideology" (p. 217). As a result, the reader may be able to see assumptions and biases that may have been previously inaccessible. When these assumptions are uncovered, the reader can be led to a process of self-corrective thinking, which is similar to the thinking processes involved in a community of inquiry. The text, then, serves as what Rosenblatt would consider a guide for a "critical reworking" and "ordering" of what has been evoked from the reader's memory. This awareness of the reader's responses to the text provides opportunity for critical discussion that would follow the 'poem.'

Rosenblatt (1964) states:

But the text may also lead him to be critical of those assumptions and associations...He may discover that he has projected on to the text aspects of his past experiences not relevant to it, which are not susceptible of coherent incorporation into it. Or he may have failed for various reasons to respond at all to some of the cues offered by the text.... the text itself leads the reader to this self-corrective process. (p. 125)

It also offers children opportunities for self-understanding and opens up a pathway for discussions about values. Rosenblatt (1978) writes:

The reader, reflecting on the world of the poem<sup>22</sup> or play or novel as he conceived it and on his responses to that world, can achieve a certain self-awareness, a certain perspective on his own pre-occupations, his own system of values. (p.146)

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<sup>22</sup> Here, Rosenblatt is using the term "poem" in the conventional sense.

When speaking about an aesthetic response to multicultural texts in particular, Cai (2008) suggests that an aesthetic stance may be of benefit to multicultural education; however, a student's aesthetic transaction with multicultural texts might also reinforce misunderstandings, stereotypes, biases, and prejudices. To illustrate, he uses an example of his advanced children's literature students' responses to *Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind*. Shabanu is a Pakistani teenager who struggles against the tradition of arranged marriage. Cai notes that many mainstream culture students responded to Shabanu as a victim of an "alien" culture, and although the students sympathized with the character, they expressed strong resentment to her culture. These students also said that they felt lucky to be living in the United States and not in the Cholistan desert area of Pakistan, but they did not see other aspects of Pakistani culture depicted in the story (p. 212).

According to Cai (2008), like many other students from mainstream culture, his students had read egocentrically. They had revealed their assumptions that people from different cultures were like them. Furthermore, they judged people from different cultures based on standards of mainstream culture. Having said this, rather than "blaming" the reader for showing resistance, Cai suggests that the teacher regards this resistance as a springboard for discussing and clarifying critical issues related to multicultural literature" (p. 217). In this way, moving from an aesthetic response to multicultural literature, as an example, to a critical discussion may offer children insights into themselves and how they and communities develop value systems. Returning to the concept of the 'poem,' with regards to an aesthetic stance and being critical, I understand the role of the 'poem' as the reader's lived experience of the text, including personal responses, reflection, and interpretation, all of which precede philosophical discussion in the community of inquiry.

### *The 'Poem' and the Process of a Community of Inquiry*

As noted previously, Transactional Reader Response is a theory of reading, and although the theory does not in and of itself offer a framework for one critical perspective over another, an aesthetic stance to reading can be used as a springboard for philosophical discussion in a community of inquiry. With regards to doing philosophy with children, an aesthetic reading would use the 'poem,' including emotions, ideas, and images that come into the reader's awareness during the reading of the text as a starting point for a conceptual discussion. In terms of the teacher's role in the discursive process that would follow an aesthetic reading, Rosenblatt (1968) minimizes the role of the teacher. She suggests that the teacher will not impose a rigid set of rules or structures to the flow of dialogue, but will allow the discussion to "grow out of the ideas and the perplexities formulated by the students themselves" (p. 246). She writes:

Given the spontaneous and largely unpredictable character of specific literary experiences and the great diversity of temperaments and backgrounds in most student groups, any discussion will tend to develop a special character and focus. To take advantage of this, the teacher will not impose a routine but will let the discussion grow out of the ideas and the perplexities formulated by the students themselves. (pp. 245-46)

Rosenblatt suggests that the teacher must not only be familiar with the concepts that arise in the work; he should also be able to see the possibilities that are presented in student responses. The teacher "will then be able to carry on an inductive process, in which the students are stimulated to raise questions and arrive at understandings that have personal significance" (p. 246). The role of the teacher here bears a striking resemblance to the role of the teacher in a community of inquiry where the discussion is ideally led by students, and guided by the teacher as participant/facilitator.

With this in mind, the ‘poem’ is relevant to doing philosophy with children if the claim that emotions influence or are judgments is true because it can offer insights into how emotions and judgments are linked and form part of the process of the development of values. Further, an aesthetic stance to reading applies to doing philosophy with children in terms of an education of the emotions, including emotion recognition. From an aesthetic response to the text, students can develop a rational approach to their felt experiences. Rosenblatt (1968) states:

The give-and-take of ideas and the interplay between different personalities will in itself have a liberalizing influence. If under the repeated stimulus of literature the students have again and again been able to start from their emotional uncertainties and work through to some rational understanding it is probably that a gradual revision of their habits of feeling and thinking will occur. (p. 246)

Rosenblatt (1978) claims that through reflection on and discussion of the reader’s aesthetic responses to the text, the reader may learn to “order his emotions and to rationally face people and situations he is emotionally involved in” (p. 239). Regarding the reflective process, Rosenblatt proposes that if the “individual is stimulated often enough to engage in this kind of reflection, it may tend to become habitual. There will have been a readiness to reflect upon his own attitudes toward people and situations as a prelude to passing judgment or deciding an action” (p. 226).

Additionally, with guidance from the teacher, Rosenblatt (1968, 1978) envisioned Transactional Reader Response as serving the purposes of democracy because of its potential to nurture social and cultural understandings. Rosenblatt (1978) maintains that an aesthetic stance when reading helps readers develop the imaginative capacity to put themselves in the place of others. In this capacity, it fits with the aims of doing philosophy with children in terms of exposing students to differences in opinions, beliefs, and values. So, an aesthetic stance when reading a text combined with reflection,

discussion, and follow-up activities holds the potential to highlight hidden assumptions, beliefs, and values, which can lead to cross-cultural understandings (see Altieri, 1996; Yenika-Agbaw, 1997; Cai, 2008). This is important for the current educational environment where the teacher must mediate amongst a diversity of worldviews.

### ***Conclusion***

In this chapter, I offered an overview of Transactional Reader Response. I was interested in reading the text from an aesthetic stance and how the ‘poem’ can be used for doing philosophy with children in terms of understanding the connections between emotions and judgment and for an education of the emotions. I also highlighted that an aesthetic stance can offer insights into self by bringing into our awareness our hidden assumptions and biases. Research suggests that this approach is useful when discussing cross-cultural values in an effort to mediate amongst diverse worldviews in the classroom. Further, combining an aesthetic stance with the process of a community of inquiry can serve to create a classroom that is not only aware of other cultures, but also recognizes how emotions can influence thinking and the development of values.

What follows from here is “Gaia-1: 2052,” the first chapter of *Shieldwolf Dawning*, the fantasy novel I am writing for children. As I mentioned before, although I have been working on this novel for some time, I wrote the opening chapter from scratch for the purposes of doing philosophy with children. Immediately following this fictional text is my Discussion chapter in which I will explore my thinking and writing process as I composed “Gaia-1: 2052.” I will also consider how I might begin a community of inquiry with the ‘poem’ as an additional approach to the traditional P4C format.

## Chapter Four

### *Gaia-1: 2052*

Samarra stood at her bedroom window and watched the night fall like a blue-black veil of distant stars. For the first time in weeks the air had begun to thin with the sunset. The heat wave had passed, and a crisp breeze rustled in leaves around the Sairfang Estate. A movement in the corner of her eye had Samarra straining her neck to get a better look at the courtyard, but there was nothing. Flickering solar torches cast moving shapes in the weak moonlight, and surveillance cameras flashed with muted lights, dotting the lush gardens every few metres or so. The estate was calm except for the faint sound of a vehicle idling in the garage below.

Without warning, a uniformed night guard came running from his post by the front gates. Samarra pressed her face closer to the window when he leaped into a patch of flowering shrubs, aiming his taser at the stray kitten playing nearby. The guard zapped his target, stunning the kitten for a moment. Samarra felt a heavy lump form in her throat when the animal started to shake, writhing in pain from the electrical shocks. When the kitten fell deathly still, the guard picked it up by the tail and lobbed it over the wrought iron gates. He spat on his hands in disgust and rubbed them on his trousers before he lit a cigarette. Then he made his way back to his post and waited for his partner to return from her patrol of the grounds.

At 19:30 the second night guard appeared; this one was a Cybot, part-Gaian/part-machine. Although she too was in uniform, she was more heavily equipped than the male. Her prosthetic right arm was reinforced with magnesium and enhanced with Sairfang Cybotics micro-artillery. Her legs had been redesigned for maximum strength, and her

solar-powered range-finder ears were tuned to capture sound waves undetected by normal Gaian hearing. The Cybot had almost reached the night post when she suddenly froze. She turned around and looked at the windows lining the upper floor of the mansion. Her artificial eyes flashed green as she scanned the area for movement. Samarra ducked and crouched down low, hoping the guard could not see her. When the coloured beams eventually disappeared, Samarra felt safe enough to stand up. She looked out the window again. The two guards were now in deep conversation.

Like clockwork, at 20:00 the Cybot headed to the other side of the estate. Soon after, Samarra heard an engine revving, and it wasn't much longer before Mr. and Mrs. Sairfang steered their roadable aircraft out of the garage. They were heading for the front gates. The gunmetal-grey vehicle purred quietly as the Sairfangs stopped to wait for the guard to approach them. The pair did not leave the estate these days unless it was by air. According to Mrs. Sairfang, the wanderers had been more ferocious than usual in their hunt for food and water. The world beyond their property was not safe.

Mr. Sairfang wound down his window and yelled at the male guard. His booming voice brought back memories of the times he had yelled at Samarra for being different; Samarra found it difficult to breathe. The guard punched a code into his microcomputer. The gates swung open, and Mr. Sairfang drove his vehicle towards the darkness of the long runway for take-off. The guard waited for the gates to slam shut and lock before he returned to his post. Once inside the shelter, he calibrated the surveillance system and sank back into his chair. He put his feet up on his desk and clasped his hands behind his head. He was ready for his evening nap.

“It's now or never,” whispered Samarra, stepping away from the window.

Apart from her old rusting bed and a rickety chest of drawers, Samarra's bedroom was sparsely furnished. She walked to her bed, kneeled down and reached deep into the hole in her mattress. She fumbled around to pull out a shiny green tablet that fit neatly into the palm of her hand. The brilliant emerald screen was engraved with various symbols. Samarra had found the micro-computer last year when she had explored the attic. Although it had been hard to figure out how to use the machine, after many nights of trial and error, she had eventually gotten it to work.

The tablet was brimming with information about a planet called Kairuhan, a world where the air was fresh and the waters ran free and clean. Samarra had kept the tablet, only taking it out from its hiding spot when the Sairfangs left the estate. She had no idea where the machine had come from or who had made it, and she didn't care. All that mattered was that it had kept her entertained. She touched the screen and the tablet lit up with a soft glow. Then she tapped on a succession of symbols, and a small three-dimensional image appeared.

"Good evening Samarra," said an old woman with long salt and pepper hair hanging loosely at her sides. Her right eye was a piercing azure; the other was glassy and white. "I have been waiting for your communication," she added.

Samarra cringed, wishing the old woman would cover her blind eye. "Hi," said Samarra, trying to hide her discomfort. "Mr. and Mrs. Sairfang have gone out for the night. They won't be back until morning."

"Good," said the old woman. "Very good." Her shiny hair moved with the light wind. "Samarra," she continued solemnly. "I have bad news."

"What is it?" asked Samarra, feeling more nervous than before.



“The Sairfangs have built a strong shield around their property. The energy extends to the edges of this grove. I am unprepared for such technology.” The image went static before clearing up moments later. “I cannot leave this area safely nor can I dispel the shield; it jams my magic. It is best that I wait for you here. You and your brother must come to me.”

Samarra’s mouth fell open. “But how do we do that? There are guards at the gate, and I’ve read horrible stories about what happens beyond the walls. I don’t want to end up dead!”

“Samarra, you must find a way out of the estate.”

“But...” Samarra couldn’t believe what she was hearing. She knew it would be difficult getting out.

The old woman put up her hands as if to stop further protests. “I am confident you will arrive here safely. If you wish to leave with me in the morning, this is what you must do.”

Samarra nodded. “Okay,” she said reluctantly, looking away.

“Now pay attention,” said the old woman as her image morphed into a holographic map. “The grove is marked here. The *x* shows your point of planetary departure,” she added. Her image morphed back. “Be here by sunrise, or you will miss the launch window.”

“By sunrise?” asked Samarra, checking her watch. “But I’ve never been outside the property. I wouldn’t know where to go.”

“Follow the highway. And take the green tablet with you,” said the old woman. “It will tell you what you need to know.”

Samarra nodded, feeling uneasy about the change in plan.

“Your brother...” said the old woman. “Is he with you?”

“I’m going to get him now,” Samarra replied. “I told him to be ready. He’s waiting for me in his bedroom.”

“Very good... Now, be careful, Samarra. Stay in the shadows, and hide if you see or hear anything on your way. It is a half moon, and the wanderers are on a savage hunt tonight. You must not be seen. I can do nothing to protect you until you reach the grove.”

“I understand,” said Samarra, trying not to show how scared she was.

“I will listen for you. Be sure Cassian arrives safely.”

“Okay... but...”

“Travel in haste, Samarra,” interrupted the old woman. “We only have a fifteen-minute launch window.”

Samarra nodded.

“And Samarra...”

“Yes?”

“Be prepared. In the morning, everything you have ever known will be changed.”

The screen flickered and the image disappeared. Samarra sighed and pocketed the green tablet. She leaned back against the side of her bed, pulled her knees against her chest, and rested her head in her hands. *What am I doing?* she thought. Was she making a mistake? What would happen once she and Cassian left the property? What if he changed his mind about running away with her? Samarra took a deep breath to calm down before she reached under her bed to grab a pile of clothes. “I have to do this. I just have to,” she whispered as she arranged her clothes under the bedcovers in the shape of a person. She hoped that Mr. and Mrs. Sairfang would assume she was asleep if they checked up on her

when they returned. Then she grabbed her backpack and stuffed in two small blankets before she tiptoed out to the marbled hallway and headed for Cassian's bedroom.

Lavish portraits of the Sairfangs and their friends decorated the dark corridor. In the largest and most elaborate, Mrs. Sairfang posed on a yacht wearing a black fur coat and the ugliest dress Samarra had ever seen. Her jewelled fingers rested lightly on Mr. Sairfang's arm; her bright-blue eyes were full of pride. Samarra's gaze lingered on Mr. Sairfang's crooked smile as she remembered the years she had spent under his supervision. Both he and his wife had considered her their servant, the control subject of their "classified" experiments, and that was the most they had told her she would ever be, but everything had taken a turn for the better last month. Samarra remembered that life-changing night as if it had happened just yesterday: Before going to sleep she had been playing with the green tablet when a message had flashed on the screen: *Homing signal activated*. The screen went blank, and a red gem hidden in the bottom right corner of the tablet lit up with a soft beep. Samarra had ignored it at the time. She had continued to read about Kairuhan and its flora and fauna until a three-dimensional image of the old woman suddenly appeared above the screen, taking Samarra by surprise.

"My name is Merganser Ravenhair," the old woman had announced. "It is a joyous occasion to make contact with you after all these years, Samarra Dawning."

Samarra gasped, almost dropping the tablet. "How... how do you know my name?"

"By your distinguishing features," the old woman replied.

Without thinking, Samarra touched her short blue dreadlocks. "My hair?"

Merganser Ravenhair shook her head. "No, your fingerprints... The moment you activated the homing signal I was transferred an image of your fingerprints."

“I see,” mumbled Samarra, puzzled. “And who are you exactly?”

“I am a Shieldwolf, a member of the combat-mage army responsible for securing the balance of Kairuhan,” Merganser Ravenhair had said with pride. “I have been searching the pluraverse for you and your brother for over ten years.”

“What?” Samarra looked around her room to see if Cassian was around. He liked to play pranks on her. “This is a joke, right?”

The old woman shook her head. “This is not a joke, Samarra. I plan to return you to the Shieldwolves.”

Samarra couldn't believe what she was hearing. “Why?” she asked. “Is it because I used the green tablet? I'm sorry... I didn't mean to do that... It was just lying around getting dusty in the attic.... I didn't think anyone would notice it was missing... I won't tell anyone I found it... I'll even put it back...I promise!” Her voice was shaky.

Merganser Ravenhair cleared her throat. “Please lock the green tablet onto local Gaian co-ordinates. It is my intention to return you and your brother to your rightful home.”

“No!” said Samarra, standing up and pacing the room. “You're wrong. *This* is our home.”

What happened next came as an even bigger shock. “The Shieldwolves found you and your brother years ago,” said the old woman. “You had been left to die in the forest. We cared for you until the Sairfangs took you both and disappeared from Kairuhan without a trace. Your guardians are rogues with a price on their heads. But now, they can no longer hide from us.” Merganser Ravenhair held up a reassuring hand. “Samarra,” she continued. “Kairuhan is your home. It is time for you and Cassian to return.”

The old woman's voice faded into the background. Samara had been stunned into silence, and she could barely think. She had never thought of herself as an alien even though she had felt like one for as long as she could remember. Samarra's world had been turned on its head.

"It is my duty to escort you both to Kairuhan. Please lock the tablet onto local Gaian co-ordinates," repeated the old woman, but this time she was more forceful.

When she had regained her composure enough to organize her thoughts, Samarra followed Merganser Ravenhair's directions and tapped in a succession of numbers and symbols, all the while feeling like an imposter in her own life story. Yet although this had all come as a surprise, Samarra couldn't help but feel a twinge of relief at the prospect of escaping her life with the Sairfangs. She started to ask question after question, and the more she learned about the old woman, the more she began to like her. They had been communicating every night since that first contact.

Samarra returned her attention to her immediate surroundings. She took one last look at Mr. Sairfang's portrait before she walked to the end of the hall. Cassian's door was ajar.

"Cass," she whispered, pushing the door open.

There was no answer. She entered the dimly lit room. "Cass," she said again as she reached for the small figure huddled under the blanket. "It's time to wake up. You were supposed to be ready by now."

"Go away," he mumbled. "I feel sick."

"We have to go," said Samarra, pulling the blanket off his head and checking his temperature. His pale face and the reek from the fever of his most recent sleep were

indications he was not feeling like his usual self. She smoothed back his dark hair with a loving hand.

“I want to sleep,” he said, burying his face in his pillow.

“Come on, Cass.... we don’t have much time.” Samarra placed her hands on his back.

“Sammy,” he said sniffing. “Leave me alone.”

Cassian tried to hide under the covers, but Samarra was too quick and pulled him out of bed. She grabbed him by the collar and glared. “We have to get going, little brother. Don’t make me drag your bum out the door.”

“Why do you always act like you’re the boss of me?” he said weakly. “I’m only a year younger than you. I’m not a little kid!”

Samarra scowled.

“All right, all right,” he said, putting his hands up in defeat. “I don’t like it when you give me that look.”

While he dressed, Samarra arranged his clothes under the blanket, just as she had done in her own room. When Cassian was ready, they headed downstairs to the kitchen. Samarra slapped away his hand when he reached for the light switch.

“No,” she whispered. “The guards will know we’re awake.”

Cassian nodded. “Okay,” he said, sitting down on the cold wooden floor. He rested his head in his hands while Samarra filled her backpack with food.

“Eat up,” she said, putting a bag of cookies in front of him. “We have a big night ahead of us.” She smiled encouragingly, gesturing at his food.

“I’m not hungry,” he said looking at her with tired eyes.

“Eat” she said. “You’ll need the energy. We’re going for a long walk.”

Cassian took a bite of his cookie and chewed quietly.

“We have to go to the grove *on our own*,” said Samarra, nervously eyeing her brother.

Cassian stopped chewing. “What? But she was supposed to take us there!”

“Don’t worry, Cass. We’ll be able to do this.” Samarra tried to look enthusiastic.

“It’s dangerous out there!” he said.

“That’s what the Sairfangs tell us. How do we know they’re not lying?”

“It’s in the news too, Sammy.”

Samarra brushed his statement away with a wave of her hand. “We’re doing what’s best for us, Cass.”

He frowned. “What if they catch us? They’ll probably lock you up in the hotbox for longer than they did the last time. I don’t want that to happen.”

A quick shiver of pain shot through Samarra when she remembered the day she had been put in the hotbox; its thermostat had been set to maximum heat.

“We should stay,” said Cassian. “We’ll try to leave when we’re older, I promise... Please?”

“Cass,” she said, sitting down next to him. “Mr. and Mrs. Sairfang weren’t supposed to have brought us here in the first place. Kairuhan is a million times better... trust me. I read all about it on the green tablet.”

Cassian pulled his sleeves over his hands to keep warm. “But they don’t treat *me* that badly,” he said softly.

“That’s because you’re a boy, and you look more like them than I do. They don’t care about me,” said Samarra, biting her chipped nails. “I’m just the help.” She

leaned closer to him. “Besides, do you *like* being their test subject?” she asked, raising her eyebrows.

Cassian averted his gaze. “Don’t say things like that, Sammy,” he mumbled. “You know I hate having my head plugged into that machine just as much as you do.” He was quiet for a while. “At least it’s not painful. Have you seen what they do to the rats?”

Samarra scowled. “So does that make what they do to us okay?” she asked, her voice rising. Cassian flinched. “I’m sorry,” said Samarra when she saw the look on her brother’s face. “I don’t mean to be like that.”

“How do you know we can trust Merganser Ravenhair?” said Cassian after a while.

“I just do,” Samarra replied. “I can feel it here.” She patted her stomach.

“That’s not exactly a good reason, Sammy.” Cassian rolled his eyes.

Samarra placed her hand on his arm. “It’s all I have for now,” she said. “Cass, we have to go. I’ll keep you safe, I promise.”

Cassian leaned against Samarra for support as he stood up. “Why do I always let you tell me what to do?”

“Because I’m your big sister,” she said with a smile. “You don’t *always* do what I say,” she added, reaching into the bottom cupboard for the thermos of hot chocolate she had made earlier on in the day. “Are you ready?” she asked as she put the thermos in her backpack. “We have to get to the grove before sunrise. Otherwise we’ll miss our ride.”

“I’m ready,” said Cassian, blowing his nose.



Samarra led him down a long hallway, keeping a good distance away from the windows. When they reached the back entrance, she punched in the security code and the door unlocked with a low buzz.

“I bet they’re going to freak when they find out we’ve run away,” said Samarra, ushering Cassian outside.

“You’re only figuring that out now?” he asked, shaking his head. Samarra ignored him, pausing at the door to take a final look at the place she had called home all these years.

“I’m not going to miss any of this,” she said and closed the door quietly behind her.

“I hope you’re right. I hope Kairuhan is better,” said Cassian following her.

“Shh...” said Samarra, giving him a foul look. She hugged the side-walls of the mansion as she made her way to the back corner of the estate. Hundreds of trees lined the elaborate gardens, giving Samarra and Cassian enough cover to move through the grounds unnoticed. “Don’t let those things see you,” she said when she spotted four surveillance bots marching towards them in single file; their solid frames were fearsome in size.

“I know,” whispered Cassian when he caught up with her in the darkness of the trees. “I’m not a dodo.”

“You’re a boy,” said Samarra, moving closer to him. “All boys are dodoes.”

“You’ve told me that one before, Sammy, and it doesn’t even make sense,” said Cassian.

Samarra turned to face her brother. “Will you be quiet?” she said crossly.

“You’re going to get us caught!”

Cassian frowned. "I'm sorry. I'm trying not to think about what we're doing."

"Shh!" Samarra whispered as she kept close watch on the surveillance bots.

The rhythmic clang of titanium against rock resounded in her ears as the robots drew nearer. "They're getting closer."

When the coast was clear, Samarra and Cassian pressed on. The night guard was asleep, his partner was nowhere in sight and the hourly robot patrol had just passed by. Although she was nervous, Samarra couldn't help but be pleased that things were going smoothly so far. "We'll have to climb up that tree then jump onto the top of the wall over there," she said, pointing at a tall oak tree in the corner. "I found a way over the other night." She headed for the tree; its branches were close enough to touch the wall.

"Here," she whispered, cupping her hands and bracing herself against the thick trunk. "I'll give you a boost-up."

Cassian put one foot in her hands and climbed onto the strongest branch. He crawled as far along the branch as he could before he stood up and leaped onto the upper wall.

"Give me that," he said, reaching down. "Throw me your backpack."

Samarra tossed the bag high into the air. Cassian caught it and slung it over his shoulder. Then he waited quietly while Samarra climbed the tree. Once they were both safely over the wall, they raced down the tarmac. Samarra made sure they kept to the shadows the entire way. After a couple of hours they reached the boundaries of the Sairfangs's property. Surrounding the property was a shimmering green security shield. Criss-crossed beams prevented outsiders from entering, and as the old woman had said, jammed magic. Samarra also knew from overhearing the security guards that the shields

stopped nothing from leaving the property unless the settings had been changed in an emergency.

“So, we can walk through this thing or we can stay here,” said Samarra. “But if we go through, we can’t get back in without the Sairfangs finding out. So, are you with me or not?”

Cassian attempted a smile. “I’m with you, Sammy,” he said, taking her hand.

They closed their eyes and counted to three before they stepped through the beams. When the hot stench of decay filled the air, Samarra knew they had crossed over to the other side. There was no turning back.

“Where to now?” asked Cassian, coughing. He clenched his stomach in pain.

“We have to go north, I think,” said Samarra, taking in her surroundings with distaste. This was the first time she had ever been this far, and it looked much worse than she had expected. Unlike the lush vegetation covering the Sairfang Estate from one end to the other, the environment out here was desolate. Even in the weak moonlight, Samarra could make out thick cracks in the hard soil and the dried up roots of thirsty trees. Green space was few and far between.

“This is ugly,” said Cassian, looking around nervously.

“I know,” said Samarra, heading towards the largest bush. “Try not to think about it.” She motioned for him to join her. She reached into her back pocket for the tablet and tapped on a symbol. The map appeared. “This is where we have to go...the grove,” she said pointing to the *x*. “We have to be there before sunrise.” Samarra measured the distance with her fingers. “I think we have to go straight ahead for at least seven kilometres and then north-east for half as long.” She put away the tablet and stood up. “Come on, we have to keep moving.”

They continued along the empty highway, keeping close to the trees and brush. Their path was littered with blown up vehicle parts, animal carcasses and not much else. Cassian was quiet. Samarra couldn't help but count the minutes to pass the time. It wasn't long before she noticed the faint glimmer of headlights in the distance.

“Quick,” she said, grabbing Cassian's hand. “Hide.” She dragged him deeper into the scrubland.

They huddled together and waited in silence for the lights to approach. Loud shrieks and gunshots gradually filled the air. Samarra wrapped her arms tightly around Cassian. A roadable aircraft zoomed past leaving a trail of smoke in its wake; its right wing had been blasted off and its tail was on fire. Not far behind an armoured vehicle was in hot pursuit. Samarra could feel Cassian tense up when the sound of bullets ripped through hard metal and a fiery explosion blew apart the vehicle's other wing. Samarra felt sick at the thought of what would happen to the people inside now that the wanderers had locked onto them. She peered through the leaves and waited until the vehicles had long disappeared before she spoke.

“Are you okay?” she asked gently.

“I'm fine,” Cassian replied. He stood up and dusted off his jeans with trembling hands.

Samarra picked up her knapsack and stood up also, trying not to show her brother how scared she was. “Good,” she said, heading back to the highway. “We have to keep walking,”

“I know,” said Cassian, sneezing.

They traveled uneventfully for another two hours before they stopped to rest. By now, Cassian was shivering uncontrollably. Samarra fumbled through her knapsack and

pulled out a blanket. She wrapped it around him and kissed him on the forehead. Then she poured him some hot chocolate, all the while paying close attention to what was going on around them.

“This is taking a long time. What if we’re going the wrong way?” asked Cassian, blowing his nose.

“We’re not going the wrong way,” she said, taking a sip of her drink before turning on the tablet. “We’re close.” She pointed at the map. “Maybe another hour...”

Cassian checked his watch. What if we’re late? The sun’s coming up soon.”

“Enough *what ifs*,” said Samarra impatiently. She packed the last of their things and started to walk away. “Are you coming?” she asked over her shoulder.

“I’m coming,” said Cassian stiffly.

They soon reached a fork in the road. One path led to an old wooden signpost. The other path led to the fiery darkness of the nearest city.

“This way,” said Samarra, heading towards the signpost. She pulled away tangled vines to clear the sign. *Contaminated area. Keep out*, it read. She checked her map again. “According to this, we’re not far from a Deadlands waste station.”

“Deadlands?” said Cassian, his voice rising in disbelief. “What are we doing here? This area’s a toxic dump!”

“There’s no other way in,” said Samarra as she walked up the path. “We have to keep going forward.”

“Sammy,” said Cassian, refusing to move. “Are you sure we should be doing this? Have you thought about this properly?”

“How many times are you going to ask me that?” she said, turning around to face him. “We’ve gone over this a million times!”

“I’m serious,” he pressed on. “Just answer the question.”

“Well, what exactly do *you* mean by ‘properly’?” she asked, folding her arms in front of her chest.

Cassian furrowed his brow as if he were trying to think of the words that would best explain what he meant. “My teacher once told me...” he said after a short while, “that when I’m not sure what to do about something I should look at the bigger picture before I make my decision. Sammy...” he went on. “Have you thought about the different things that might happen if we go with Merganser Ravenhair? What if the Kairu are worse than the people here? Have you thought about that?” Samarra said nothing. Cassian’s voice faltered. “Well, have you?”

“Cass,” she said quietly. “I’m going to tell you a secret.” She walked over to him until they were close enough to touch. “Sometimes at night I lie in bed, and I worry about what will happen to me when I grow up. I don’t want to live like this anymore. Can you understand?”

“Not exactly,” said Cassian, looking away.

Samarra sighed. “The Sairfangs have *always* liked you more than me. They get you the best teachers; they’re always buying you new clothes... new toys... new everything! They even gave you their last name. It’s as if they’re proud of you for stuff you haven’t even done. Not me, though...” she pointed at her chest. “They gave me a rag and told me to polish the furniture.” She took a shaky breath and reached into her back pocket for the green tablet. “When the old woman messaged me last month on this computer-thing-whatever-it-is, I freaked out at first. But then I felt like jumping and laughing and jumping some more. That’s the first time I’ve ever felt like that.” Samarra put away the tablet and placed her hand on Cassian’s arm. Her

eyes were bright with anticipation. “Don’t you get it? I have one chance to leave this place for good. Not going with Merganser Ravenhair would be a mistake; going without you would be worse. You’re my brother and I love you. We have to stick together. You have to come with me.”

Cassian wiped his nose with his sleeve and looked at her intently. “This isn’t like picking out what clothes you’re going to wear in the morning, Sammy. This is different. This is a big deal.”

“I know,” she replied softly. “I know.”

Cassian stared at the ground, deep in thought. “Come on then...” he said after a long pause. “Let’s go.”

“I’m making the best decision for both of us,” said Samarra with a smile.

“We’ll be okay,” she added as she led him up the path. “I know we will.”

They clambered over rocky terrain for some time before the path gradually opened up to reveal the edges of a sickly grove. “This is it, Cass,” she said, catching his eye. “Are you ready?”

“I guess,” he said, coughing and wheezing.

Samarra checked her watch. “Sunrise in twenty-seven minutes,” she said as she headed for the trees. “I can’t wait for lift-off!”

Cassian shook his head. “I don’t believe I’m doing this,” he mumbled with a sniff as he followed his big sister into the grove.

## Chapter Five

### Discussion

#### *Introduction*

This chapter serves two purposes. In the first section, I will explore the thinking and writing process I used when composing “Gaia-1: 2052” to include cues that might encourage philosophical inquiry in the classroom. Given space constraints, I will limit my discussion to three main excerpts from my fictional text. I will explain how and why I wrote the pieces in the way I did, and I will compare them to the P4C texts. In the second section, I will consider how I might use two excerpts from “Gaia-1: 2052” to begin a community of inquiry with the ‘poem.’ I will start with a general discussion about what this approach might look like. I will then move to a reflection on my personal responses to the text, and look at how I might use such responses to encourage philosophical discussion that has the potential to lead to an exploration of emotions and values.

#### *On Writing “Gaia-1: 2052”*

When I began writing *Shieldwolf Dawning*, I realized very quickly that I had to familiarize myself with the basic conventions of writing a story for a younger audience—I wanted to write for Grade Six. Although I had read voraciously from the fantasy genre, including the works of Ursula Le Guin, J.R.R. Tolkien, Phillip Pullman, and many others, writing in this genre did not come easily. I attended a writing workshop, I obtained writing advice from a mentor, and I participated in a regular writing group. As well as the general machinations of story writing inasmuch as forming a beginning, middle, and end, and trying to make the story as interesting as I could, when I decided to compose the opening chapter for the purposes of doing philosophy with children, I had to learn how to



create content that would serve as cues for philosophical discussion. I also wanted to write in a manner that would appeal to emotions.

As I mentioned previously, I started reading *Harry Stottlemeir's Discovery* in an attempt to understand how Matthew Lipman had incorporated cues into the story to encourage philosophical conversations in a community of inquiry. I also wanted to know how he modeled the rules of formal logic. I recognized early on that it would be impossible for me to develop "Gaia-1: 2052" to incorporate everything from the first chapter of Lipman's text. *Harry Stottlemeir's Discovery* shows the discovery of the rules of formal logic through reflection and dialogue, and it illustrates explicitly discussions using the community of inquiry as a model. The text also holds numerous references to a range of philosophical thought, from Spinoza and his writings in *Ethics* to Wittgenstein's *Foundation of the Principles of Mathematics* (Sharp & Reed, 1992, pp. 190-98). The breadth and depth of philosophical knowledge demonstrated by Mathew Lipman was something I could only aspire to at this point in my learning.

To keep my inquiry manageable, I chose to start with a few things that were important to me as a teacher interested in exploring values with children. To facilitate discussion on the process that underpins the development of values, I chose to address the concept of decision-making because making decisions is something we do in our everyday lives. Furthermore, it seemed to me that using the term "decision" in the text rather than the term "judgment" might be more accessible to Grade Six children, at least in the beginning stages of a community of inquiry. To elaborate on this choice of terminology, within the process of decision-making is the act of making judgments. Judgments inform our decisions (Dewey, 1933; Pardales, 2002; Lipman, 2003). All of this plays into the process of developing values. Judgments are also linked to our

emotions (Robinson, 1983; Pizarro; 2000; Lipman, 2003; Schleifer & McCormick, 2006), so I wanted to build into the opening chapter a foundation for inquiry into how our emotions are linked to our judgments. When I came across the work of Kieran Egan, I decided to look at how I might use binary opposites as a stepping stone for this kind of discussion.

According to Egan and Judson (2008), “any child who has mastered an oral language will have a number of cognitive tools available for learning” (p. 21). These cognitive tools include story structuring, metaphor, vivid images, binary opposites, rhyme and rhythm, jokes and humour, and a sense of mystery (see also Egan, 1986). Egan and Judson argue that as children get older another set of cognitive tools develops. These tools include, but are not limited to, engagement with the “limits of reality and the extremes of experience” (p. 21); for example, an interest in *The Guinness Book of World Records*. Children also develop associations with the heroic, where they appropriate on some level certain qualities of the heroes and heroines they learn about. This is in keeping with Elizabeth Yeoman’s (1999) claim that a child’s identification with certain characters in a story is central to the process of making meaning. What was of immediate interest to me here, however, was the idea of using binary opposites as a starting point for discussion.

Drawing from Bruno Bettelheim, Egan and Judson (2008) suggest that children “bring some order into [their] world by dividing everything into opposites” (p. 22). They go on to say that human beings can easily divide their world into binary opposites, and these opposites are our “first and clearest grappling tools” to make sense of reality (p. 22). Oppositions can be created from continua of size, speed, temperature, texture, and even morality. This method of learning through binary opposites in story, Egan (2001)

explains, would be a reflection of how children develop meaning of the physical world. To use his example, [with guidance from an adult] children can learn to grasp meaning of their physical world by beginning with opposites, and they tend to learn these things based on their bodily experiences. When a toddler puts her hand in a tub of hot water, the mother might say “hot.” Should the same toddler be playing in the snow, the father might say “cold.” In this way, children begin to grasp language based on binary opposites. Once children have understood these oppositions, they are in a position to develop an understanding of what concepts might fit in between such as warm, lukewarm, and so on.

Egan (2001) claims that the underlying structure of stories that interest children are based on binary conflicts such as good/evil, life/death, security/fear, and so forth (see also Egan 1986; Egan & Judson, 2008). Egan and Judson (2008) use the example of the Grimm fairy-tales to explain that under the surface of the story lie opposites such as good/bad, brave/cowardly, security/fear, rich/poor (p. 22). Egan (1986) explains that binary opposites are embodied by characters and events in the story, and these binary opposites work as criteria for selection and organization of story content and the framework from which the story moves forward. Egan (1986, 2001) also uses the example of Cinderella to show how a story might begin with a conflict between the binary opposites of good and bad. In this case, the wicked stepmother is the embodiment of bad and Cinderella is the embodiment of good. Egan goes on to say that the selection of action and other characters is determined by the need to show the goodness of one in opposition to the badness of the other.

As a strategy being put forward as part of an educational model, Egan (1986, 2001) emphasizes that it is important for children to then seek to mediate the binary opposites they begin with so that they may develop an understanding of what might lie in

between these binary opposites. He argues that learning through story from forming binary opposites as a way to initially grasp content can be facilitated through looking at the characters in the story and the events. Egan (1986) uses the Cinderella example to illustrate this idea of mediating between binary opposites of good and bad. He suggests that there is mediation in some versions of the Cinderella story when the stepmother and ugly stepsisters see “the error of their ways and, through Cinderella’s goodness, they too live happily ever after” (1986, p. 27). Although I accept Egan’s position of using binary opposites as a starting point for how we might use story to help children make sense of abstract concepts, his choice of the Cinderella fairy-tale as an example is problematic. Here, Egan does not address the messages that are embedded within the text, thereby missing the implications that such texts might have for identity formation and development of values in children, especially in terms of the gender acculturation of girls.<sup>23</sup> To briefly explain my concerns, I return to Yeoman.

In her study of children’s (Grade Four/Five) responses to stories and how various kinds of texts constitute a child’s sense of gendered identity, Yeoman (1999) found that a child’s identification with certain characters was central to the process of making meaning; therefore, the concept of role models in texts became important, and a critical examination of real and fictional characters with whom children identify became necessary for revealing hidden assumptions. Yeoman maintains that although stories hold the potential to reinforce limiting and oppressive meaning within society, they also hold

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<sup>23</sup> For an exploration on the connections between fairy-tales and gender acculturation, see Lieberman, M. (1972). “Some day my prince will come”: Female acculturation through the fairy tale. *College English*, 34(3), 383-395 and Hasse, D. (2004). Feminist fairy-tale scholarship. In D. Hasse (Ed.), *Fairy tales and feminism: New approaches*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

the potential to allow children to take part in alternative discourse<sup>24</sup> and development of new meanings. This potential for meaning-making can be tied into Ricoeur's (1991) analysis of the transformative potential of story in terms of forming narrative identity. This point has also been raised by Rosenblatt (1968, 1978) who claims there is a transaction that occurs between reader and text. Such a transaction is explained as a live circuit whereby the reader brings to his/her interpretation of the text a collection of past experiences, biases, beliefs, and so on - the *other* of the text and the *I* of the reader become interconnected in some capacity. This event can be transformative because it offers the reader an opportunity to obtain understanding of self, including personal beliefs and values. Further to this, Vokey (2001b) claims that stories serve to inform dispositions by showing the behaviours of exemplary characters when faced with certain dilemmas. In this respect, the reader might identify with and seek to emulate the characters in the story. So, for the purposes of doing philosophy with children, I also wrote into my opening chapter cues to provide children with opportunities to discuss issues of gender. However, I will not look at this aspect of "Gaia-1: 2052" here.

In *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery*, Lipman (1980) does not begin with binary opposites as a starting point for an exploration of thinking habits (or mental acts); rather he embodies a number of thinking habits in the main characters from the onset. According to Oscanyan (1992), among the major characters in the story certain kinds of mental acts recur, especially the logical ones. One such style is deductive, and others encompass variants of the good reasons approach. Those that predominate in *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* are wondering (Harry Stottlemeier), thinking deductively (Tony

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<sup>24</sup> Discourse refers to "the ways in which we organize and explain lived experience through language" (Yeoman, 1999, p. 430).

Melillo), intuitive or hunchlike thinking (Lisa Terry), seeking and enjoying explanations (Fran Wood), being sensitive to the feelings of others (Anne Torgerson), and thinking independently (Mickey Minkowski) (p. 179).

Using *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* as a model, one of my aims was to provide opportunities for discussion about various thinking habits through the introduction of new characters later in the novel. In the opening chapter, however, I decided to work with binary opposites. I chose to embody and exaggerate the concepts of emotion and reason in the two protagonists with the intention of exploring throughout the course of the novel and through a community of inquiry that this division of emotion and reason is inaccurate. I wanted to illustrate how one might seem to make judgments (or decisions) based on purely emotions or purely reasons, but when looked at closely, both emotion and reason are intimately connected. I began to wonder how I might set up binary opposites of emotion and reason as cues for philosophical discussion, which would ultimately lead to mediation on what might lie between these opposites. So, for the purposes of this inquiry I accepted Egan's position that children begin to acquire an understanding of the world through initially grasping binary opposites.

By incorporating this thinking into my own story, I was aware that I would be opening myself up to objections from the postmodern feminist critique of such dualisms. For instance, according to Susan James (2000), a large body of feminist scholarship on philosophy of the mind has been grounded in the central claim that the polarization between emotion and reason is gendered. Over the course of the history of philosophy, the mind and its capacity to reason has been linked to masculinity, while the body, including emotions, has been linked to femininity. James adds that evidence of this view has come from at least two sources: first, overtly sexist philosophers of the past have

claimed that women by nature are less capable of reasoning than men, and women are more inclined to “ground their judgments from emotional responses” (p. 29); second, feminists have inquired into the various ways in which gendered oppositions are present, even in the work of philosophers who have not been explicit in setting up any differentiation between the mental capacities of women and men, or linking women to the “bodily work of reproduction and domestic labour” (p. 29). Through close readings of these texts, she continues, feminist scholars have shown that the language associated with women throughout the history of philosophy has been consistently marginalized by comparison to the language associated with men. James notes that over the years many feminists have disrupted this hierarchical relationship between mind and body, and reason and emotion. She argues that feminist writers have addressed the opposition between mind and body in an effort to show how the body has been marginalized in philosophy. Much of this work, James goes on to say, aims to question the distinction between the mental and the physical by showing how the mind and body are interrelated, and how the body “contributes to, and is implicated in, thought” (p. 30). This distinction, she asserts, has been repeatedly questioned to the point where it is now doubtful whether it is useful to keep these two categories separate.

Similar views are expressed by Schleifer and McCormick (2006) who claim that emotions are not only a form of cognition or a form of judgment, they are also linked to our beliefs; Robinson (1983) who sees emotions as having the capacity to influence our judgments; and Pizarro (2000) who argues that emotions play a central role in the process of moral judgment. With these critiques in mind, I chose to embody and exaggerate Samarra, the main protagonist, as being mostly led by her emotions and Cassian, her brother, as being mostly led by reason. By using the protagonists in my story to represent

binary opposites, I wanted to embed cues that would hopefully lead children to mediate between making judgments grounded in reason and making judgments grounded in emotions.

### *Dialogue*

Looking back at the development in my thinking and writing as I learned more about doing philosophy with children, the words I chose to incorporate into the dialogue of my fictional text became increasingly important. For instance, according to Ann Margaret Sharp (1992), “the story form that models dialogue is a more effective pedagogical tool for conveying information in such a way that children can appropriate it for themselves” (p. 58). The children in the P4C stories reflect on and discuss metaphysical, epistemological, aesthetic, and ethical aspects of their everyday experiences. They are not overtly taught the principles of logic but discover these principles through reflection and dialogue with each other, and through dialogue with teachers, parents, grandparents, and other adults. To offer an example of the child-centred dialogue contained within the P4C novels, I draw on *Lisa* (1976). The following excerpt shows a discussion that begins with animal rights. As much as space allows, the text pursues the dictum of Socrates to follow an argument where it leads:

“Hey Fran,” Lisa called out, “what d’ya think? Do animals have rights?”

“You’ve got to be kidding,” Fran laughed. “No one wants to admit that people have rights, so who’s going to admit anything about animals? Besides, I can just see myself some day as a lawyer in court representing a cat whose tail has been stepped on.”

“And what about kids?” put in Mark. “Do they have rights?”

“Kids!” Fran laughed again. “They’re halfway between people and animals! That’s the way some people think.”

“Kids get rights when they grow up,” commented Bill Beck.



“Naw,” said Mark. “You’ve got rights the moment you’re born. You’ve got a right to be fed and clothed. You’ve got a right to medicine and a right to an education. You’ve got a lot of rights if you’re a kid.”

“But what about animals?” insisted Lisa. “Do they have a right not to be killed and eaten?”

Bill replied, “It’s their right to kill us and eat us if they can catch us, and it’s our right to kill them and eat them if we can catch them.”

“Does the same go for killing people?” Harry asked. “Is it just being able to catch them that gives us the right to kill them?”

“Sure thing,” answered Bill. “And when that happens, we call it war, and then it’s okay.” (p.4)

This passage is Lipman’s attempt to illustrate how children might play out a philosophical discussion about rights. Although the issue of rights is not a focus for my inquiry, I am including an extract from my own writing that can be used to cue talk about animal rights. I want to illustrate the approach I chose to take when writing a text for the purposes of philosophical discussion as a deviation from Lipman’s strategy of modeling dialogue explicitly:

Without warning, a uniformed night guard came running from his post by the front gates. Samarra pressed her face closer to the window when he leaped into a patch of flowering shrubs, aiming his taser at the stray kitten playing nearby. The guard zapped his target, stunning the kitten for a moment. Samarra felt a heavy lump form in her throat when the animal started to shake, writhing in pain from the electrical shocks. When the kitten fell deathly still, the guard picked it up by the tail and lobbed it over the wrought iron gates. He spat on his hands in disgust and rubbed them on his trousers before he lit a cigarette. Then he made his way back to his post and waited for his partner to return from her patrol of the grounds.

During this inquiry, I began to understand that doing philosophy with children is never a matter of only following a set of guidelines or textual cues—it is much more than that.

Doing philosophy with children is a matter of being able to recognize opportunities for philosophical discussion in a story, the ability to recognize opportunities for philosophical discussion in student responses, and using my judgment to determine which questions to ask to nurture such dialogue when students are at a standstill.

Although I accept that dialogue is useful as a pedagogical tool when modeling philosophical discussion, I am also inclined to argue that too much dialogue in concentrated spaces can make for dense reading material, especially for children. Additionally, I found that constantly weighing down my opening chapter with large chunks of philosophical dialogue took away from the pace of the story. I wanted to use the chapter to set the scene, give context for the two protagonists, establish their relationship to each other, and serve as an introduction to the concepts of emotions and judgment. In the extract about the kitten, I did not make a conversation about rights explicit. Rather, I played around with the technique of using imagery to appeal to the emotions in an attempt to generate an aesthetic response in the reader. However, the limitation of my approach is that the onus of modeling philosophical dialogue is placed on the teacher. Later on in this chapter, I will look at how I might use the extract above to begin a community of inquiry using an aesthetic stance when reading.

Further to the dialogue I incorporated into “Gaia-1: 2052,” I began working with text that would set up the two main characters as contrasting in terms of their approaches to decision-making (or judgment making). I wanted to combine the idea of using binary opposites through dialogue (as well as action) to illustrate that Samarra is largely driven by her emotions. I also wanted to make the dialogue between the children as believable as I could manage. This required me to spend time listening to conversations between children and looking at blogs to see the language children would use to express themselves. To give basic examples, “‘I just do,’ said Samarra. ‘I can feel it in here.’ She patted her stomach,” not only reminds me of those times when I have had such a strong feeling in my gut that I have acted upon it without thinking too deeply about the consequences, but it also reminds me of what a

child might say when she does not know how to respond to a question. So, I created Samarra Dawning as a teenager who seems to make decisions based on her gut feelings. Samarra represents emotions. In contrast, I created Cassian as a child who seems to base his decisions on more of a good reasons<sup>25</sup> approach. “‘That’s not exactly a good reason, Sammy.’ Cassian rolled his eyes.” Cassian represents reason.

Although I tried to exaggerate each character as dominant in either emotion or reason, there are times when their behaviours overlap. Samarra reasons through some courses of action, and Cassian at times acts largely from his emotions. This approach would hopefully provide a cue for facilitating dialogue on whether we ever make judgments (decisions) only from reason or only from emotion. The excerpt that follows provides an example of how I wrote into the text (via embodiment) opportunities to discuss the binary opposites of emotion and reason:<sup>26</sup>

“We should stay,” said Cassian. “We’ll try to leave when we’re older, I promise... Please?”

“Cass,” she said, sitting down next to him. “Mr. and Mrs. Sairfang weren’t supposed to have brought us here in the first place and Kairuhan is a million times better... trust me. I read all about it on the green tablet.”

Cassian pulled his sleeves over his hands to keep warm. “But they don’t treat *me* that badly,” he said softly.

“That’s because you’re a boy and you look more like them than I do. They don’t care about me,” said Samarra, biting her chipped nails. “I’m just the help.” She leaned closer to him. “Besides, do you *like* being their test subject?” she asked, raising her eyebrows.

Cassian averted his gaze. “Don’t say things like that, Sammy,” he mumbled. “You know I hate having my head plugged into that machine just as much as you do.” He was quiet for a while. “At least it’s not painful. Have you seen what they do to the rats?”

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<sup>25</sup> The good reasons approach is a method of moral reasoning that the members of a community practice in their discussions about the text under investigation. The good reasons approach seeks to highlight and evaluate reasons that are relevant to particular scenarios. The main purpose for good reasons is to evaluate one’s thoughts and the thoughts of others with regards to actions or events (see Chapter Two of this thesis for further clarification).

<sup>26</sup> As an aside, this excerpt offers another connection to a discussion about rights by appealing to the emotions through dialogue about experimentation on animals and children.

Samarra scowled. “So does that make what they do to us okay?” she asked, her voice rising. Cassian flinched. “I’m sorry,” said Samarra when she saw the look on her brother’s face. “I don’t mean to be like that.”

“How do you know we can trust Merganser Ravenhair?” said Cassian after a while.

“I just do,” Samarra replied. “I can feel it here.” She patted her stomach.

“That’s not exactly a good reason, Sammy.” Cassian rolled his eyes.

Samarra placed her hand on his arm. “It’s all I have for now,” she said. “Cass, we have to go. I’ll keep you safe, I promise.”

As I mentioned previously, given that the main concepts I wanted to explore were judgment and emotions, I did not want to use “Gaia-1: 2052” to elaborate on what a philosophical discussion about these ideas might sound like in practice. Furthermore, I could not find a suitable opportunity to insert such dialogue. Having said this, it is my intention to develop philosophical discussion between children and between children and adults as the novel develops. Later in this chapter, I will look at how I might use this extract to begin a community of inquiry from an aesthetic stance.

As I learned more about the thinking process, I also began write into the story references to particular thinking acts in an effort to encourage children to think about thinking. To explain, Oscanyan (1992) notes that a survey of *Harry Stottlemeier’s Discovery* shows that there are at least eighty-six different kinds of mental acts that can be attributed to the children in the story. The mental acts that are most commonly displayed include thinking something to oneself, thinking about oneself, remembering, being uncertain, drawing an inference, consciously expressing an opinion, devising an example for a proposed rule, trying to figure something out, wondering (whether, why, how, what), and making a decision (p. 179). What follows are some examples from “Gaia-1: 2052” that I might use to encourage discussion about mental acts, in other words, different thinking habits. When beginning the community of inquiry from an

aesthetic stance, an exploration into thinking habits would likely result further into the discussion once the ‘poem’ has been explored. References to these mental acts can also be used to open up discussions about the connections between reason and emotion and emotion and judgment:

- “Samarra’s gaze lingered on Mr. Sairfang’s crooked smile as she remembered the years she had spent under his supervision.” This sentence can be used as a cue for discussion about what it means to remember.
- “Samarra returned her attention to her immediate surroundings. She took one last look at Mr. Sairfang’s portrait before she walked to the end of the hall.” Here Samarra is thinking about the past, and then she returns her attention to the present. What might it feel like to do this? What role does the imagination play in this? What is imagination?
- “Without thinking, Samarra touched her short blue dreadlocks.” This can be used to facilitate discussion on the concept of thinking. What is thinking? Is it possible to not think? What are some things we might do “without thinking?”
- Cassian stared at the ground, deep in thought. “Come on then...” he said after a long pause. “Let’s go.” What does it mean to be deep in thought? What happens when we are deep in thought? Are there layers to our thoughts? On what occasions might we be required to think deeply about something?

The formal logic component in the P4C texts was the most difficult to emulate given my limited understanding of the rules of formal logic. In the opening chapter of *Harry Stottlemeier’s Discovery*, Lipman begins to lay out the foundation of formal logic by starting with the rule of conversion. Lipman et al (1979) claim that the rule of conversion is the “basic building block” of classical logic. Classical (formal or Aristotelian) logic is the form of logic that is the closest to everyday language and is said to develop in children an awareness of the need for consistency. Formal logic offers children tools that reinforce the careful use of valid reasoning patterns, it helps them with mathematics and science by developing their ability to make inferences, and it helps them obtain an understanding of how the meaning of a word in a

statement may alter the entire meaning of the statement, thereby prompting them to use words more carefully (Cannon & Weinstein, 1985).

To explain the rule of conversion, Lipman et al (1979) highlight that an ordinary sentence that states something can be divided into four basic parts. If the sentence does not have those parts, the sentence can be reconstructed to include those parts. These parts include the following:

- i. The Quantifier (either “All,” “Some,” or “No”);
- ii. the Subject (always a noun-phrase);
- iii. the Verb (either “is” or “are”);
- iv. and the Predicate (always a noun-phrase). (p. 146)

Conversion is when the subject and predicate are reversed. There is also a logical relationship between subject and predicate. This relationship is often a part-whole relationship. To illustrate, I use an example offered by Lipman et al (1979) which is included in *Philosophical Inquiry*, the manual that accompanies *Harry Stottlemeier’s discovery*: “All eagles are birds.” In this statement, eagles represent only one portion of a larger class of birds; therefore the relationship of the subject “eagles” is a relationship of part to whole. In this case it is evident that the class of eagles is smaller than the class of birds. It does not work to say the larger is part of the smaller, or that all birds are eagles. This is why if I try to convert a sentence beginning with “all” it will not usually work because I am trying to make the larger whole a part of what is smaller.

The rule that Harry discovers in *Harry Stottlemeier’s Discovery* is that if he makes a true statement that begins with “all,” and he reverses its subject and predicate, then the second statement he derives from the first is likely to be false. Having said this, there are exceptions to the rule (p. 146). What follows is an example from *Harry Stottlemeier’s*

*Discovery* of how the children in the story come to test the rules of formal logic through their discussion. In this instance, it is the rule of conversion that is being explored:

“Lisa, I’ve just had a funny idea!” Harry announced rather loudly.

Lisa smiled at him and looked at him expectantly.

“When you turn sentences around, they’re no longer true!” Harry said.

Lisa wrinkled her nose. “What’s so wonderful about that?” she asked.

“Okay,” said Harry, “give me a sentence, any sentence, and I’ll show you.”

“But what kind of sentence?” Lisa looked doubtful. “I can’t just think up any old sentence offhand.”

“Well,” said Harry, “a sentence with two kinds of things in it, like dogs and cats, or ice cream cones and food, or astronauts and people.”

Lisa thought. Then just as she was about to say something, and Harry was waiting impatiently for her to come out with it, she shook her head and thought some more.

“Come on, two things, any two things,” begged Harry.

Finally Lisa made up her mind. “No eagles are lions,” she announced.

Harry pounced on the sentence the way his cat, Mario, would pounce on a ball of string that had been rolled towards him. In an instant, Harry had the sentence reversed: “No lions are eagles.” He was stunned. The first sentence, “No eagles are lions,” had been true. But so was the sentence when reversed, for “no lions are eagles” was also true!

Harry couldn’t understand why it hadn’t worked. “It worked before…” he started to say aloud, but he couldn’t finish the sentence. (p. 3)

As with the lengthier P4C novels, Lipman writes into the text explicit examples of how discovering the rule of formal logic might work itself out as a process of reflection and dialogue. What follows is my example of dialogue between Samarra and Cassian that includes one statement I might use to launch an inquiry into the rules of formal logic.

Here, I am also drawing from Egan (1986) who suggests the use of humour as a strategy for organizing teaching content into story form:

“Shh…” said Samarra, giving him a foul look. She hugged the side-walls of the mansion as she made her way to the back corner of the estate. Hundreds of trees lined the elaborate gardens, giving Samarra and Cassian enough cover to move through the grounds unnoticed. “Don’t let those things see you,” she said when she spotted four surveillance bots marching towards them in single file; their solid frames were fearsome in size.

“I know,” whispered Cassian when he caught up with her in the darkness of the trees. “I’m not a dodo.”

“You’re a boy,” said Samarra, moving closer to him. “All boys are dodoes.”

“You’ve told me that one before, Sammy, and it doesn’t even make sense,” said Cassian.

Samarra turned to face her brother. “Will you be quiet?” she said crossly. “You’re going to get us caught!”

Cassian frowned. “I’m sorry. I’m trying not to think about what we’re doing.”

“Shh!” Samarra whispered as she kept close watch on the surveillance bots. The rhythmic clang of titanium against rock resounded in her ears as the robots drew nearer. “They’re getting closer.”

When I originally wrote this piece, I had included dialogue between Samarra and Cassian that was more in line with what Lipman had done with Harry and Lisa; however, upon reading my work I felt that lengthy dialogue interrupted the tension that was building. After revising the content, I decided that the statement “All boys are dodoes” would suffice to provide a simple cue for a discussion about the rule of conversion, including talk about what it means to make a gross generalization. “All boys are dodoes” also provides a cue for facilitating an exploration into how we can tell when statements are true or false. The extract also holds the potential to elicit an aesthetic response in terms of a child perhaps identifying with the emotions that are implicit in the relationship between brother and sister, or expressing fear at the prospect of the children being caught by the robots. However, writing the text in this manner again places the onus on the teacher to explicitly model philosophical discussion about the rules of formal logic. To address this concern, the teacher can acquire basic information on these rules in the Logic Review section in *Philosophical Inquiry* (Lipman, Sharp, & Oscanyan, 1979, pp. 456-73). I will now turn to how I might use the aforementioned extracts from “Gaia-1: 2052” to begin a community of inquiry with the ‘poem.’



### *The 'Poem'*

Louise Rosenblatt (1968, 1978) maintains that literature provides an avenue through which the ethical and moral dimensions of human action are accessible. She claims that it is our ability to identify with the actions in the story that allow us to gain broader literary and life perspectives. She (1968) also claims that while educators have paid attention to the technical and historical aspects of literature in the classroom, for the larger part certain societal assumptions remain accepted without question (pp. 8-9). To use her example, in class students are often asked to define the nature of the characters in the text they have been reading, they are encouraged to see relationships between motives and actions, and they are tested on cognitive understandings. Rosenblatt adds that while these questions might derive a more scientific response which can be measured, do we question underlying assumptions in the story and, also, in ourselves?

This takes me back to my time teaching Grade Five/Six, particularly teaching English Language Arts. During the two-hour literacy block that was a daily requirement, we would cover reader response, grammar, writing, spelling, and all other activities related to the acquisition of language and the development of communication skills. I was using an efferent approach to reading. Having said this, we would also attempt to explore the story in a critical manner as part of the process of a literature circle.<sup>27</sup> For example, we would discuss the concept of values as well as

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<sup>27</sup> In a literature circle, children engage in reading texts and talk about what they have read. This discussion can be called exploratory talk. Through exploratory talk, children can relate the story to their everyday experiences, assess the actions of the characters in the story and justify their views, seek answers, empathize with characters and imagine the events in the text, contribute to group discussion about the text, and respond to and build on the views of other group members. King (2001) claims that the freedom to discuss texts in a literature circle can allow children to engage in a range of these sense-making strategies, thereby deepening their responses as they engage in the process of meaning construction (p. 34).

multicultural or feminist perspectives, we would also attempt to uncover assumptions in the text, but I cannot say that I used a literature circle as a community of inquiry in terms of facilitating or modeling philosophical discussion, even though the circle provided a perfect opportunity to do so.

Although reader response was a regular part of the literacy block, I did not encourage my students to read the text from an aesthetic stance, largely because I was not introduced to this approach in my own pre-service teacher education classes. In hindsight, combining the methods of P4C and an aesthetic stance when reading may have offered my students the opportunity to explore the text, self, and others using an approach that was a complement to the [efferent] norm, develop their reasoning skills, and nurture a disposition that is open to exploring alternative ways of perceiving the world. With these things in mind, what might it look like to begin a community of inquiry with the ‘poem’?

As I work through this discussion, I find that approaching the text from the traditional P4C format for a community of inquiry relatively straightforward. I can anticipate how students might respond to the contrast between the way Samarra and Cassian seem to make decisions. To guide their discussion, if necessary, I might ask questions such as, What is a decision? What kinds of decisions are there? I might ask questions to highlight the contrast between emotion and reason and explore their role in how we make judgments, thereby guiding the community of inquiry to a discussion about judgment and its connection to emotions. This might eventually lead into dialogue about how judgments affect our values and vice-versa. However, if I were to imagine what a community of inquiry might look like when using the ‘poem’ as beginning, composing questions becomes more of a challenge because it is difficult to

pinpoint what aspects of the story might resonate with my students, how these aspects might move my students, or if they would elicit any kind of reaction at all.<sup>28</sup>

### *Plain Speculation*

To explain how I might approach a community of inquiry<sup>29</sup> with an aesthetic stance as a starting point, I am left to speculate.<sup>30</sup> I will begin with a general discussion about what this approach might look like by first exploring how I might use possible responses from children to extend the ‘poem’ as a method of exploring emotions, for instance. My focus on the aesthetic stance here does not include an aesthetic response in its totality. For the purposes of this section and its relevance to the P4C focus on an education of the emotions (including emotion recognition), and my own interest in exploring the connections between emotions and judgment, I will look primarily at elements of the ‘poem’ that arise from the reader’s memory, including the images, thoughts, ideas, attitudes, feelings, and emotions the reader might have with what the words point to rather than the lyrical aspect of the aesthetic experience or as Rosenblatt (1986) would say, “The sound of words, their rhythmic repetitions and variations” that are listened to “in the metaphoric ‘inner ear’” (p. 124).

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<sup>28</sup> Although an aesthetic stance when reading a text does not discount the importance of personal responses, including emotional and associated imagery and ideas, there are times when some responses might not be conducive to the discussion. In these cases, it is up to the teacher as to whether she would permit these responses to be discussed or perhaps steer the discussion to an inquiry into another response. Furthermore, to minimize losing aspects of each child’s felt experience with the text, it makes sense to explain to the children what an aesthetic stance to reading is prior to their participation in a community of inquiry that begins with the ‘poem.’

<sup>29</sup> As De Haan, MacColl and McCutcheon (1995a; 1995b) suggest, when participating in a community of inquiry children would typically sit in a circle so that they can see everyone and hear everyone clearly.

<sup>30</sup> I acknowledge that there might be readers who do not adopt an aesthetic stance. In such cases, these children can still participate in a discussion about the responses of other group members.

An important point to note here is the immediacy of the aesthetic response. To Rosenblatt (1982), “Once nonverbal or verbal comments have given some glimpse into the nature of what the young readers have made of the text, the teacher can provide positive reinforcement by leading to further reflection on what in the experienced story or poem had triggered the reactions” (p. 276). From this approach to a community of inquiry, the ‘poem’ as response is what would launch philosophical discussion.<sup>31</sup> The opportunity for children to engage in the process of making artwork of their choosing immediately after they have read the text may be one method of capturing the elusiveness of aesthetic responses.<sup>32</sup> Once the children have created their artwork, they can be encouraged to explain what their art means. The teacher can capture keywords on flip chart paper for later discussion. After the children have verbalized their ‘poems,’ the teacher would then guide the community of inquiry through a process of developing a rational understanding to these felt experiences. In terms of using this method for an education of the emotions, Rosenblatt (1978) claims that through reflection on and discussion of the reader’s aesthetic responses to the text, the student may learn to “order his emotions and to rationally face people and situations he is emotionally involved in” (p. 239). Further, with regards to the reflective process that would follow the ‘poem,’ Rosenblatt proposes that if the “individual is stimulated often enough to engage in this kind of reflection, it may tend to become habitual. There will have been a readiness to reflect upon his own attitudes

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<sup>31</sup> An individual’s ‘poem’ can be used to begin a community of inquiry, but as Rosenblatt (1968, 1978) maintains, it is also important to eventually approach the text in terms of a valid reading.

<sup>32</sup> The suggestion to include various forms of making art as methods of capturing aesthetic responses was made by Dr. Michelle Forrest during a recent conversation (November 13, 2008) about the challenges that a teacher might encounter when approaching a community of inquiry that begins with the ‘poem.’

toward people and situations as a prelude to passing judgment or deciding an action” (p. 226).

During this process of reflection and interpretation, Cai (2008) points out there may be a conflict between the reader’s “assumptions or expectations about life” and the “attitudes, moral codes, social situations” the reader is experiencing with the text. As a result, the reader may be able to see assumptions and biases that may have been previously inaccessible. He explains that as readers are not ideologically innocent, their response to literature, “inevitably reveals beliefs, values, assumptions, and attitudes that derive from a certain ideology” (p. 217). Once an exploration of these various factors has occurred, a critical reading of the text can then be developed further. As I mentioned earlier on in this chapter, there were sections in “Gaia-1: 2052” that I composed with the specific intention of appealing to the emotions in an attempt to generate an aesthetic response in the reader (if possible). What follows is the example I used for comparative purposes. I will now use this extract to highlight how it might work in a community of inquiry that begins with the ‘poem’:

Without warning, a uniformed night guard came running from his post by the front gates. Samarra pressed her face closer to the window when he leaped into a patch of flowering shrubs, aiming his taser at the stray kitten playing nearby. The guard zapped his target, stunning the kitten for a moment. Samarra felt a heavy lump form in her throat when the animal started to shake, writhing in pain from the electrical shocks. When the kitten fell deathly still, the guard picked it up by the tail and lobbed it over the wrought iron gates. He spat on his hands in disgust and rubbed them on his trousers before he lit a cigarette. Then he made his way back to his post and waited for his partner to return from her patrol of the grounds.

In this passage, I attempted to work with a concrete experience of the mistreatment of an innocent animal. I wanted to illustrate an action that was cruel, further punctuated by a lack of remorse on the part of the person doing the action – the security guard. Here, I will look at two simple responses to explain how I might use the ‘poem’ to

begin a community of inquiry. Let us assume that a child says, “I felt angry when I read about what the guard did to the kitten,” or he paints a picture that depicts his anger towards this act. To explore this response further, I might ask him to explain why he thinks he felt anger. I might ask what is anger? How do we know when we are angry? How might we know when someone else is angry? Where does anger come from? How do we know when to be angry? What are feelings? Is there a difference between feeling and thinking? I might even ask him what part of the passage made him react the strongest and why? As the interpretation of the ‘poem’ continues, if other students have not contributed to this particular response, I might ask if anyone else feels the same way and why, thereby eliciting diverse responses about a scenario that has the potential to encourage a broader discussion about feelings and emotions. Questions such as, What might lead the guard to do what he does to the kitten? Is what he does right? might lead children to explore the concept of judgment in the context of the thinking process we go through when we make particular choices.

Now, let us assume that another child responds with “I can’t stop laughing about it,” or he draws a picture that depicts this kind of response. As Cai (2008) suggests, rather than “blaming” the reader for showing resistance or, in this case, for sharing a personal response that is unpalatable, the teacher can use the opportunity as a springboard for discussing and clarifying critical issues. Further, Vokey (2001b) suggests that the principles or values that are considered relevant to practical judgment are dependent on how the situation under inquiry is interpreted. In this respect, perception is crucial to practical judgments because problems “do not come ready made;” rather, they are the result of how we *see* or *frame* certain situations. In other words, our ability to act in a particular way is partly a matter of interpreting (or seeing) that situation in the proper

light, which in turn is also a matter of responding with a suitable kind and degree of emotional response. Vokey claims that there are two aspects to this educational process: certain emotions must be “evoked” and linked to certain situations, and stories can “sanction or discourage” evoked emotions by showing their connections to decisions and actions that might lead to positive or negative consequence. So, questions that require the child to explain why he feels this way can help frame the situation under inquiry and provide an opportunity for discussing appropriate emotional responses to particular situations. Vokey’s point connects to Rosenblatt’s argument for the importance of the aesthetic stance.

To elaborate, Rosenblatt (1978) claims that the text serves as a guide for a “critical reworking” and “ordering” of what has been evoked from the reader’s consciousness. So, to immediately shut down this kind of comment because it does not sit well with my personal beliefs may do a disservice to the child and other children who are listening to the discussion. In light of Rosenblatt’s view, I would consider such a response as an opportunity for self-understanding. However, as a teacher who is interested in the development of values, including good judgment and caring behaviours, I would also be inclined to explore societal views on the mistreatment of animals as an act that is considered inappropriate; otherwise some children might perceive me as tacitly condoning negative behaviours such as cruelty to animals.

Framing how the child sees such an act may shed light on his beliefs and assumptions and engender group discussion about emotions as well as values. Keeping in mind that the community of inquiry is ideally led by students, questions I might choose to ask in an attempt to extend the ‘poem’ and highlight the beliefs and assumptions that underpin such a response include: Describe why you think this passage made you laugh?

Do we always laugh when we find things funny? Where does laughter come from? Is there a difference between a feeling and an emotion? What feelings or emotions might Samarra be experiencing here? Why might she be feeling these things? What feelings might the kitten be experiencing? What feelings and emotions might the security guard be experiencing? How might we know what to name the feelings or emotions that we have never felt before? How might we know how to name the feelings that another person or animal might be experiencing?

Hearing the child's 'poem,' followed by reflection, interpretation, and group discussion allows for the transformative potential that Ricoeur (1991) points out arises when an individual transacts with the text. Such a transformation can potentially result in what Kristjansson (2000) explains as changing beliefs as a result of effects that change the heart<sup>33</sup> (p. 10). He adds that in order to change one's beliefs one must know what those beliefs are, so what is required from the onset is self-understanding which can start with framing the situation as well as our responses to it. This self-understanding can result from a community of inquiry that begins with the 'poem' and is extended to explore emotions and values as part of philosophical discussion.

### ***My 'Poem'***

To offer an alternative example of how I might begin a community of inquiry with the 'poem,' I turn to some of the questions I might ask based on my own reactions to "Gaia-1: 2052" when I read it from an aesthetic stance. My dilemma here is that I wrote the piece, and responding to a fictional text that I composed may not be as

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<sup>33</sup> Although Kristjansson does not explicate what he means by the term "heart," given the context of what he is writing about, I am left to assume that heart refers to emotional perceptions.



authentic as a response from an individual who has never been exposed to the text.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, exploring my free-write, my reactions to the text at a particular moment in time, can still be used to explain how the ‘poem’ might begin a community of inquiry. Further, it offers me an opportunity to reflect on the assumptions and beliefs that I may have long forgotten in an effort to seek the self-understanding that Rosenblatt reaches for with her approach to reader response.

As I mentioned previously, embedded in the excerpt I am responding to are cues that I hoped might encourage philosophical dialogue about emotion and reason. I am using the excerpt again to explore how an aesthetic stance might work as an additional approach in terms of using the ‘poem’ as beginning for philosophy with children. The italicized text indicates my free-write (aesthetic) responses:

“We should stay,” said Cassian. “We’ll try to leave when we’re older, I promise... Please?”

“Cass,” she said, sitting down next to him. “Mr. and Mrs. Sairfang weren’t supposed to have brought us here in the first place and Kairuhan is a million times better... trust me. I read all about it on the green tablet.”

Cassian pulled his sleeves over his hands to keep warm. “But they don’t treat *me* that badly,” he said softly.

“That’s because you’re a boy and you look more like them than I do. They don’t care about me,” said Samarra, biting her chipped nails. “I’m just the help.” She leaned closer to him. “Besides, do you *like* being their test subject?” she asked, raising her eyebrows.

Cassian averted his gaze. “Don’t say things like that, Sammy,” he mumbled. “You know I hate having my head plugged into that machine just as much as you do.” He was quiet for a while. “At least it’s not painful. Have you seen what they do to the rats?”

Samarra scowled. “So does that make what they do to us okay?” she asked, her voice rising. Cassian flinched. “I’m sorry,” said Samarra when she saw the look on her brother’s face. “I don’t mean to be like that.”

“How do you know we can trust Merganser Ravenhair?” said Cassian after a while.

“I just do,” Samarra replied. “I can feel it here.” She patted her stomach.

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<sup>34</sup> As an aside, when I originally wrote the piece, it was not my intention to highlight difference as a racial issue; rather, I intended to explore difference as an issue of gender.

“That’s not exactly a good reason, Sammy.” Cassian rolled his eyes. Samarra placed her hand on his arm. “It’s all I have for now,” she said. “Cass, we have to go. I’ll keep you safe, I promise.”

*“That’s because you’re a boy and you look more like them than I do. They don’t care about me.” I feel empathy for Samarra. As a woman, and as a person of colour, I am immediately drawn to the notion of difference because of my experiences growing up in a predominantly white school. I too felt different—sometimes I still do. I remember running home one day and trying to rub the colour off my face because I wanted to fit in. I wanted to look like the other girls in my class. I had been excluded from the games the kids would play because of the colour of my skin. But I am only different on the outside. On the inside I am the same as everyone else... “Trust me?” I’ve heard that before. “I can feel it here.’ She patted her stomach.” Can I trust my feelings?*

Pizarro (2000) proposes that our emotions can reflect our existing beliefs.

“Emotions are not vacuous reflexes devoid of rational influence,” he states. “Rather, emotions reflect our pre-existing concerns, such as our moral beliefs and principles” (p. 358). In turn, the beliefs we hold can also affect our emotional responses to a particular moral situation. Our underlying beliefs moderate the presence of emotions, making our emotional responses a “reflection of previous cognitive deliberations” (p. 371). Further to this, he argues that our emotional responses can help us “focus our attention and our cognitive resources to the problem at hand” (p. 358). In this respect, the ‘poem’ holds the potential to provide the reader insights into self.

To explain further, during an aesthetic transaction, Rosenblatt (1968, 1978) suggests that the reader does not erase her past experiences or identity; rather, the reader brings forth new experiences and creates new meanings which can be understood as the ‘poem.’ The ‘poem’ is the result of the guidance of the text combined with what is being

evoked from the reader's memory. When evoking the 'poem,' the reader is "immersed in a creative process that goes on largely below the threshold of awareness" (p. 52). In contrast to a predominantly efferent stance, where I would be reading the text for information gathering, a predominantly aesthetic stance allows me to feel the text, to let my mind wander, to remember things I may have long forgotten.

Rosenblatt (1978) sees the text as "stimulus" that activates elements of the reader's past experiences with both literature and life. She suggests that different aspects of the text will resonate with the reader depending on the reader's existing assumptions and existing experiences. It is evident here that my past experiences influenced my 'poem,' and if I were to explain my responses in a community of inquiry, it is reasonable to assume that some participants might respond to what I am saying positively, and others might respond negatively. To illustrate, my response to the notion of difference prompts me to think back to Cai's (2008) class's reactions to Shabanu, where, although many of his mainstream culture students responded to Shabanu as a victim of an "alien" culture and sympathized with the character, they also expressed strong resentment to Shabanu's culture. Cai suggests that the teacher can regard this resistance as a springboard for discussing and clarifying critical issues.

As I mentioned before, the community of inquiry is ideally led by students; however, there will be occasions when the teacher will interject with questions to keep the inquiry moving, or perhaps lead students to look more closely at their emotions, feelings, assumptions, and beliefs that might underpin their responses. Bearing this in mind, and depending on where the discussion goes, I might use the following questions to extend my response to difference: What does it feel like to be different? This question might provide students with an opportunity to see another perspective as well as explore

what it might feel like to be the “other.” Additional questions I might ask if I thought it appropriate would include, What does it mean to be different? What makes a person or thing different to us? Have we ever come across a person or thing that we think is different? What were our reactions? Why did we react in this way? I might also refer to *On the inside I am the same as everyone else* and ask, What does it feel like to be the same? This move sets up a binary opposite between difference and sameness that students might mediate between during the community of inquiry. Given the increasingly diverse make-up of our classrooms, I find that a discussion about difference that springs from a response such as my ‘poem’ might serve to encourage students to look at their own assumptions, beliefs, and values. When these assumptions are uncovered, the reader can be led to a process of self-corrective thinking.

If a student does not comment on, “*Trust me?*” *I’ve heard that before.* “*I can feel it here.*” *She patted her stomach,*” I might ask: What does a gut feeling feel like? Or I might ask students to explore the comment *Can I trust my feelings?* What are feelings? Is there a difference between feeling and thinking? I might also point out *I feel empathy for Samarra* and ask them about empathy. What does empathy feel like? What is empathy? Is empathizing a decision? From this, a discussion about feelings and emotions can be developed further, which holds the potential to lead to dialogue on emotion recognition as well as offering the possibility of opening up talk about the dualisms of emotion and reason that are embodied in the text. In this respect, the ‘poem’ can eventually lead to the same discursive process that P4C would use in a traditional community of inquiry format.

### *Conclusion*

In this chapter, I have attempted to illustrate how I composed “Gaia-1: 2052” to facilitate philosophical discussion. I also explored how I might use the text to begin a community of inquiry with the ‘poem’ rather than via the traditional format used by P4C. When working through a community of inquiry, the primary differences between a community of inquiry that begins with the traditional P4C format and one that begins with an aesthetic stance would lie in the approach the child takes when reading the text. In this respect, an aesthetic stance would introduce children participating in a community of inquiry to an additional method of reading and response. Such an approach holds the potential to access assumptions and beliefs through lived experiences with the text. This can lead to a discussion about values and an education about emotions, which is a focus of P4C. Such an approach might open up philosophical discussion about emotions (and their links to judgment or reason) that begins with a child’s felt experience of the text under inquiry.

## Chapter Six

### Conclusions and Implications for Teaching

#### *Summary of this Inquiry*

As I wrote the introduction for this thesis, it was my intention to answer the following questions: What is the thinking and writing process I use as I compose a fictional text for the purposes of doing philosophy with children? How might I use an aesthetic stance when reading this fictional text to begin a community of inquiry? I wanted to explore these questions from within the framework of the Philosophy for Children (P4C) program with the aims of sketching out how I could work with story as a resource for exploring values with children. Doing philosophy with children made sense in terms of its potential for values education, because a large component of philosophy is the development of sound reasoning and good judgment. All I had to do was reflect on how my own thinking had developed as I learned more about philosophy to come to the conclusion that this approach to learning would also benefit the children I taught.

My inquiry into doing philosophy with children has led me to see the world with different eyes, and to question my intentions and my assumptions before I act. I now look more closely at how I think, at how I perceive things, at what I believe and value, and at the emotions that may or may not affect the judgments I make. My disposition has changed in terms of developing a conscious effort to temper my emotions during the times when I discuss my worldviews with individuals who hold different values. My writing has also evolved to include a personal expectation to clarify my thoughts in order to make my ideas more accessible to others. As with Ricoeur's (1991) description of the transformative potential of the reader-text relationship, my transactions with the literature

I read throughout the course of this inquiry have changed me intellectually and emotionally, both of which have undoubtedly shifted my practice as a student, as a teacher, and as a global citizen.

With regards to doing philosophy with children, Matthew Lipman and others had already laid out the groundwork for philosophy as pedagogy. Philosophy for Children (P4C) introduces children from K-12 to philosophy in an attempt to develop their ability to think more reflectively, critically, reasonably, and more openly. P4C places an educational focus on the improvement of reasoning ability, development of creativity, personal and interpersonal growth, development of ethical understanding, and development of the ability to find meaning in experience through a teaching and learning process that incorporates reading, reflection, and dialogue. P4C also explores the relationship between thinking and socio-cultural contexts that are relevant to a child's life. To me, these were all aspects of what I understood as also being the aims of values education.

Further to this, studies that have measured student achievement when participating in the P4C program have shown that doing philosophy helped children develop their ability with formal and informal reasoning (Shipman, 1983). Children also improved their skills to deduce, infer, clarify, make connections, distinctions, and generalizations, as well as the capacity to make differentiated moral judgments (Russell, 2002). Younger children made significant gains in moral autonomy, changes over time were noted in empathy and judgment, and emotion recognition showed marked improvement (Schleifer et al, 2003). Through practice in philosophy, children developed their reading skills, which links language ability to thinking ability and vice-versa; these children also demonstrated

examples of reflecting, rationalizing, probing, and wondering (Othman and Hashim, 2006).

In the context of philosophy as an activity that promotes thinking about thinking, in my own learning I discovered that judgment is part of a process that is related to how we develop our values. In the words of Dewey (1933), judgments are “units in reflective activity” (p. 119). Judgments are connected to one another enough to support each judgment in leading up to a final judgment, which we can call the decision. Judgments are also linked to our emotions. So, exploring values with children would also require me to highlight the connections between emotions and judgment, because as James (2000) argues, the mind and body are interrelated and the body “contributes to, and is implicated in, thought” (p. 30). Bearing this in mind, it is reasonable to assume that both of these factors influence us when we form our values.

With regards to the relationship between emotions and judgment, another point to note is the importance of an education of the emotions. This P4C focus acknowledges the need to discuss feelings and emotions to help students reflect on their personal emotions and the emotions expressed by others. As I mentioned in Chapter Two of this thesis, the push to address emotions is influenced by research on the causal links drawn between confusion about one’s emotions and acts of violence. Schleifer and McCormick (2006) argue that an education of the emotions is necessary for students to be able to reflect on and recognize their emotions. So, I began to look for ways to highlight how emotions and judgments were connected to each other in the larger process of forming values. It is here that Louise Rosenblatt’s work on Transactional Reader Response became relevant to doing philosophy with children through story.



Transactional Reader Response theory takes into consideration the reader's past experiences. When reading and interpreting a text, the reader brings to her interpretation biases, assumptions, beliefs, and values. This organic connection between reader and text occurs as a meaning-making process that is influenced by socio-cultural contexts. In Transactional Reader Response there are two stances a reader can adopt toward a text, predominantly efferent and predominantly aesthetic. A predominantly efferent stance is an approach to reading a text that is used mainly for the purposes of information gathering. Efferent reading occurs when the reader is looking to acquire factual information from the text. A predominantly aesthetic stance refers to responses to a text whereby the reader is mindful of what is being "lived through in relation to the text *during* the reading event" (Rosenblatt, 1985, p. 124). Here, the reader would focus her attention on the felt experiences that arise from her memory, including all of the images, thoughts, ideas, attitudes, feelings, and emotions that the words and their referents might evoke in her as she is reading.

During this aesthetic transaction, Rosenblatt suggests that the reader does not erase her past experiences or identity, rather the reader brings forth new experiences and creates new meanings which can be understood as the 'poem.' The 'poem' comes into being in the relationship that exists between reader and text and is the result of the guidance of the text combined with what is being evoked from the reader's memory. As Rosenblatt (1968, 1978) proposes, an aesthetic reading can serve as a bridge to understanding and rationalizing emotions, as well as providing opportunities for reading critically under the guidance of the teacher.

Furthermore, Rosenblatt (1968, 1978) claims that literature provides an avenue in which the ethical and moral dimensions of human action are accessible. She notes that as

a result of the experiences that have their roots in socio-cultural backgrounds, the reader might experience moral conflicts when discussing her responses to the text. These moral conflicts, Rosenblatt argues, would arise from the relationship with the text, including reactions to particular themes, actions, values, and numerous other factors that might evoke an aesthetic response. Cai (2008) also points out that there may be a conflict between the reader's "assumptions or expectations about life" and the "attitudes, moral codes, social situations" the reader is experiencing with the text. As a result, the reader may be able to see assumptions and biases that may have been previously inaccessible. In this capacity, a child's aesthetic response might offer a pathway to highlighting biases, assumptions, and beliefs that may have otherwise remained dormant.

As I mentioned earlier, I was interested in how P4C used story for moral education. Fantasy stories had always captured my attention as a child, and they still do. So, I decided to take on the task of writing a fantasy text for the purposes of beginning a community of inquiry with the 'poem.' Through the fictional text I wanted to develop, it was my intention to encourage philosophical discussion that explores the relationships between judgment and emotions and their role in the development of values. In terms of an education of the emotions, I also wondered how the 'poem' could be used with my fictional writing to begin a community of inquiry. In the previous chapter, I highlighted how I wrote "Gaia-1: 2052" for these purposes. I also speculated on how I might begin a community of inquiry with the 'poem' as an additional method for the current P4C format. Such an approach holds the potential to be beneficial to values education via doing philosophy with children.

### *Implications for Teaching*

During my research, I have concluded that there are various good reasons for incorporating the ‘poem’ into the beginning of the process of a community of inquiry. I am not suggesting that this method should be used as a replacement for the traditional P4C format; rather, I am proposing it is as an additional approach. There are at least two educational areas that would benefit from using this method. These areas are the P4C focus on an education of the emotions and cross-cultural education, both of which can be connected to each other as well as to the development of values in general.

Lipman et al (1980) explain that morality consists not only of emotions themselves but in the behaviour that is associated with those emotions. By accessing emotions as a direct experience through the ‘poem,’<sup>35</sup> children may be able to develop a more authentic approach to an education of the emotions. In this way, philosophizing about emotions and feelings does not become what White (2001) explains as a demanding “academic enterprise” that deals with abstract matters far removed from a child’s everyday experiences” (p. 20); rather, beginning a community of inquiry with the ‘poem’ places the child right in the middle of the experience of the emotion itself. From here, philosophical inquiry into emotions can result from a focus on felt experiences with the text. Another implication for an education of the emotions is that through launching a community of inquiry with the ‘poem,’ children can begin to rationalize and understand their emotions, particularly the ones that they might not initially recognize. This would be

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<sup>35</sup> As I noted in the previous chapter, for the purposes of this section and its relevance to the P4C focus on an education about the emotions (including emotion recognition), and my own exploration of the connections between emotions and judgment, I am interested in the ‘poem’ that arises from the reader’s memory, including the images, thoughts, ideas, attitudes, feelings, and emotions the reader might have with what the words point to, rather than the lyrical aspect of the aesthetic experience.

achieved through reflection, interpretation, and discussion with their peers; it would also provide support for practice in emotion recognition—I will return to this later.

With regards to how our background experiences shape our aesthetic response to a text, Vokey (2001a) claims that practical and moral judgments are shaped by “beliefs, attitudes, interests, norms, and priorities that influence and in turn are influenced by the practices in which we engage” (p. 2). He adds that our decisions and actions are generally consistent with the background assumptions that constitute our moral standpoint. Pizarro (2000) proposes that our emotions can reflect our existing beliefs, including our moral beliefs and principles. In turn, the beliefs we hold can also affect our emotional responses to a particular moral situation. Our underlying beliefs moderate the presence of emotions, making our emotional responses a “reflection of previous cognitive deliberations” (p. 371). He adds that our emotional responses can help us “focus our attention and our cognitive resources to the problem at hand” (p. 358). In this respect, the ‘poem’ holds the potential to provide the reader with insights into self.

Rosenblatt (1968, 1978) emphasizes that through the transaction between reader and text, readers can learn to look for and evaluate the socio-cultural influences that are embedded in their responses to literature. In this capacity, Rosenblatt maintains the importance of understanding a reading event in the context of its personal, social, and cultural setting. As mentioned before, readers bring to the text moral and religious codes and social philosophies created primarily from family and community backgrounds. Cai (2008) also highlights Rosenblatt’s claim that these socio-cultural contexts are always individually internalized, which is why an aesthetic response can be used as a “matrix” for analyzing the socio-cultural influences on the reader. He adds that aesthetic reading is not simply a personal reading that is detached from the reader’s belief system, the

reader's personal response to a text may be "charged" with "social political implications" (p. 215). He explains that as the reader is not ideologically innocent, her response to literature, "inevitably reveals beliefs, values, assumptions, and attitudes that derive from a certain ideology" (p. 217). As a result, the reader may be able to see assumptions and biases that may have been previously inaccessible.

Bearing this in mind, using the 'poem' as beginning for a community of inquiry, combined with reflection, discussion, and follow-up activities holds the potential to highlight hidden assumptions, beliefs, and values. When these assumptions are uncovered, the reader can move through a process of rationalizing and self-corrective thinking. This awareness of the reader's responses to the text provides opportunities for critical discussion that would follow the 'poem.' In this way, children can engage in an inquiry into how our emotions and judgments are connected to each other. Such a discussion might also allow for what Lipman et al (1980) consider an exploration of the means for making ethical judgments. These are things such as respect for other points of view, an ability to empathize with others, the capacity to reason consistently, the ability to imagine diverse possibilities, sensitivity to the various factors that comprise an interpersonal situation, and care and concern for others. In this capacity, the P4C teacher would have the opportunity to use an aesthetic response to encourage students to see the process one uses to reach good judgments based in reason and emotion. This also holds benefits for the development of values in children and is relevant to cross-cultural education, which leads me to my next point.

As I mentioned previously, the P4C focus on an education of the emotions is influenced by research on the causal links drawn between confusion about one's emotions and acts of violence. Schleifer and McCormick (2006) argue that an education of the

emotions is necessary for students to be able to reflect on and recognize their emotions. Kristjansson (2000) explains that the problem with unjustifiable emotional reactions to certain situations is not that they are “morally unfitting,” but rather that they have been irrationally formed. To give an example, he highlights how irrational “self-deceptions” can play a large part in emotions such as disgust of other races. With regards to these irrational beliefs, Kristjansson claims that in order to change one’s beliefs, one must know what those beliefs are. He adds that the most powerful techniques to regulate emotions are those that encourage the student to evaluate his “emotion-beliefs” critically and to re-orient them if need be. To explore these emotions and beliefs Kristjansson suggests the use of story and discussion. Through this, children can be led to reorient or refocus their beliefs by beginning with the ‘poem’ which holds the potential to highlight underlying beliefs and assumptions. Children would then be guided through a process of reasoning through their emotions as part of a community of inquiry. As they hear about other ‘poems’ during this discussion, they can begin to learn from each other and rationalize their emotions, they can begin to appreciate other points of view and other values. This experience, then, holds potential for allowing the reader to develop cross-cultural understanding as well as emotion recognition.

### ***Concluding Remarks***

Rosenblatt envisioned Transactional Reader Response as serving the purposes of democracy because of its potential to nurture social and cultural understandings. Philosophy for Children holds similar aims. As I have attempted to show throughout this inquiry, merging the two methods and using the ‘poem’ as beginning for a community of inquiry is valuable in terms of achieving this vision. In an educational environment that is

becoming increasingly diverse, the teacher's role to mediate amongst these various worldviews requires an approach that opens children's minds to alternative ways of viewing and being in the world, and encourages peaceful behaviours through understandings of self. With the 'poem' as beginning, "the reader-critic can range as far as he wishes, bringing to bear ever wider and richer circles of literary, social, ethical, and philosophical contexts" (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 174). Such an approach to doing philosophy through story holds the possibility of providing children with a child-centred education that nurtures inclusionary practices, tempered dispositions, the development of reasoning habits, an understanding of the links between emotions and judgment and their relationship to how we form our values, and the development of good judgment. In this capacity, implementing the 'poem' as beginning for a community of inquiry offers a method of connecting mind and body during the development of values in children.

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