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The Philosophy for Children Curriculum: Resisting 'Teacher Proof' Texts and the Formation of the Ideal Philosopher Child

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Abstract The philosophy for children curriculum was specially written by Matthew Lipman and colleagues for the teaching of philosophy by non-philosophically educated teachers from foundation phase to further education colleges. In this article I argue that such a curriculum is neither a necessary, not a sufficient condition for the teaching of *philosophical* thinking. The philosophical knowledge and pedagogical tact of the teacher remains salient, in that the open-ended and unpredictable nature of philosophical enquiry demands of teachers to think in the moment and draw on their own knowledge and experience of academic philosophy. Providing specialist training or induction in the P4C curriculum cannot and should not replace undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in academic philosophy at universities. However, although for academic philosophers the use of the P4C curriculum could be beneficial, I will argue that its use poses the risk of wanting to form children into the ideal 'abnormal' child, the thinking child—the adult philosopher's child positioned as such by the Lipman novels. The notion of narrativity is central in my argument. With the help of two picturebooks—The Three Pigs (2001) by David Weisner and Voices in the Park (1998) by Anthony Browne—I illustrate my claim that philosophy as 'side-shadowing' or meta-thinking can only be generated in the space 'in between' text, child and educator, thereby foregrounding a 'pedagogy of exposure' (Biesta 2011) rather than 'teacher proof' texts.

Keywords Philosophy for children · P4C · Philosophy with picturebooks · Teaching philosophy · Philosophical novels · Pedagogy of exposure

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Introduction

Since 1969, pioneer of Philosophy for Children (P4C), Matthew Lipman, developed with colleagues from the International Association for Philosophy for Children (IAPC) a specially written curriculum for the teaching of philosophy to children. This curriculum paved the way for an international response by practitioners, often trained initially with Lipman and colleagues in the United States. After returning to their own countries and different cultural settings some of these P4C proponents translated the programme more or less literally into the language of their home country and set up training courses similar to the ones they experienced at the IAPC. But also a broader 'translation' took place: connecting the programme with different educational expertise, philosophical interests, talents and awareness of the curricular needs of their own country.

From the early 1990s onwards, new resources and practices mushroomed. Initially, the development to replace the philosophical novels was resisted by Lipman (personal conversation, August 1992), who emphasised the importance of a carefully structured curriculum for teachers without an academic background in philosophy. The introduction of alternatives to the P4C curriculum generated new debates about the necessary requirement for teachers of P4C (and the trainers of these teachers) to have a background in academic philosophy.

The phrase 'philosophy with children' was born to distinguish between the 'official' Philosophy for Children Programme, and the diversification of approaches using other resources such as 'philosophy with picturebooks' (Murris 1992). The phrase philosophy 'with' children articulated an important difference and became more widely used much later by what Vansieleghem and Kennedy (2011) refer to as the 'second-generation' P4C-proponents. They broke with a strategic uniformity to the educational approach and 'welcomed difference as a principle of growth' (Vansieleghem and Kennedy 2011, p. 172). The emphasis for many, but certainly not all, of them is no longer on a curriculum that models the normative ideal of analytic reason, but on dialogue that generates communal reflection, philosophical conversations and democratic practices that include child and young people's voice—regarded as a potential transformative power in deciding what counts as philosophy. As argued below, one's conception of narrativity has implications for one's philosophical classroom practice.

Initially, the diversity in methods and different resource material provoked profound tensions and disagreements in the field and this diversity has implications that go way beyond the immediate practice of P4C. A closer look at these issues will reveal why. In Lipman's writings we can find reasons for why he was, with good reason, deeply concerned about this 'rupture'. His justifications for the use of his philosophical novels are more or less systematically sprinkled throughout his writings. Many arguments centre round the need for a particular kind of philosophy textbook that supports and guides non-philosophically trained teachers. Without such curriculum support, it is very unlikely that teachers will teach 'proper' philosophy.

In this article I critically explore the idea that training teachers to use philosophical texts that 'model' (used as a noun) a certain kind of philosophical knowledge and 'model' (used as a verb) philosophical thinking for students and teachers to internalise, constitute sufficient support for non-philosophically educated teachers. I propose a particular take on what it means to think philosophically and examine whether a text can indeed in principle achieve this on its own (even with specialist training), that is, teach complex, philosophical meta-thinking. Although the modeling function of a text can be useful in class, I argue that

(as is the case with other texts such as picturebooks) the particular role of the teacher is salient. The educational 'package' of P4C curriculum plus training alone is not sufficient for non-philosophically educated teachers to philosophise with children in class. I show how a particular conception of narrativity has implications for how a text is positioned in philosophical praxis and also, how the philosophy for children curriculum positions a particular conception of child philosopher.

With the help of two picturebooks—*The Three Pigs* (2001) by David Wiesner and *Voices in the Park* (1998) by Anthony Browne—I illustrate my claim that philosophy as meta-thinking can only be generated in the space *in between* text, child and educator, thereby foregrounding a 'pedagogy of exposure' (Biesta 2011). The implications are that we need to give up the idea that children represent the opportunity for teachers to *form* them into the ideal philosophical thinker.

The Philosophy for Children Curriculum

Partly co-written, the Philosophy for Children (P4C) curriculum consists of eight specially constructed philosophical novels with accompanying teacher manuals, each one of them targeting a different age group (for the novels, see Lipman 1969, 1976, 1978, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1987, 1996). Each novel features children and young people in dialogue about the philosophical dimensions of their experiences. Abstract concepts that are familiar territory in the work of adult philosophers are embedded in the novels. The manuals in turn are designed to 'maintain the inquisitive momentum to which the novel gave the initial impetus' (Lipman 1988, p.148) and contain a substantial range of follow-up exercises, games, and discussion plans.

Bypassing the need for any stage-theory of children's cognitive development, the P4C programme sequences practice in a range of thinking skills rather than competences. Unlike 'normal' worksheets or educational materials, Lipman's novels do not focus on the production of answers, but aim to provoke open-ended philosophical questioning. Lipman (1997, p.1) suggested that exercises and discussion plans should be 'integral parts of the elementary level philosophy curriculum, and without a curriculum of some kind, the chances that one will be able to do philosophy at all are greatly reduced'. The exercises and discussion plans in the different manuals are sequenced *logically*, and the P4C programme is a *logically* and not an *empirically* sequenced curriculum. Lipman (1988, p.147) stressed that an empirical sequence would involve a correspondence 'to already existing stages of cognitive development derived from descriptions of children's behaviour in non-educational contexts'. As Kennedy (2011, p.60) puts it, radical curriculum innovator Lipman constructed: '…a combination of elementary school curriculum and pedagogy both so obvious and so novel that in one stroke it lays a framework for a radical new theory of education'.

P4C-proponents often encounter significant resistance when introducing P4C in their own educational institutions, including universities. One important reason that explains this resistance is Lipman's challenge to the still remarkably pervasive nature realist developmental thinking (Taylor 2013; File 2012) in educational curriculum design and practices. Other reasons include: P4C's inclusion of child in the process of meaning-making, and the experiential, democratic nature of this revolutionary approach to learning and teaching (see e.g. Haynes and Murris 2012). Kennedy (2011, p. 60) emphasises its inclusive, democratic nature as follows:

> The educational praxis that emerged from Lipman's venture, for all its apparent staid simplicity, operationalizes a postcolonial standpoint epistemology vis a vis childhood and children, pulls the linchpin that holds in place the school as ideological state apparatus, and empowers the elementary classroom as a primary site for democratic theory and practice.

The philosophical novel as conceptualised in the P4C programme aims to model not only philosophical thinking, but also to express these democratic ideals.

The Philosophical Novel as a Model

Lipman explains (1997, p.1) that student teachers and teachers need 'models of *doing philosophy* that are clear, practical and specific. They need to be able to distinguish essentially decidable concepts from essentially contestable concepts, if they are to understand why only the latter are truly philosophical'. The novels function as *models*. The novels are not a narrative version of the history of philosophy (as e.g. attempted in Jostein Gaarder's *Sophie's World* 1994), but central philosophical ideas, themes, and questions have been 'injected into' the text without the use of technical jargon. The history of Western philosophy is presented as a mode of thinking, with the novels representing the kind of thinking that is typical of the history of philosophy—unlike philosophy as a body of knowledge that needs to be learned and memorised. The novels are a 'model', in the sense of 'model' understood as a noun, as a 'thing', an 'object'. De Marzio explains: 'the philosophical text as a model…is a smaller, schematic *description* of a larger more systematic and rationally organized phenomenon' (De Marzio 2011, p.40; my emphasis). For example, in the philosophical novel *Elfie* (Lipman 1987, pp 4, 5), six year olds are introduced to a key idea in Descartes' philosophy and represented as follows[1]:

> Last night I woke up, in the middle of the night, and I said to myself, 'Elfie, are you asleep?' I touched my eyes, and they were open, so I said, 'No, I'm not asleep.' But that could be wrong. Maybe a person could sleep with her eyes open. Then I said to myself, 'At this moment, am I thinking? I really wonder'. And I answered myself, 'Dummy! If you can wonder, you must be thinking! And if you're thinking then, no matter what Seth says, you're for real'.

And in David Weisner's picturebook *The Three Pigs*, the idea of a text as model (as a noun) can be illustrated by the following image (Fig. 1).

In this version of a well-known fairy-tale the wolf huffs and puffs so hard that the house disintegrates so that he can eat the pig. At the same time, in the image the pig is blown out of the story itself, creating the possibility of a meta-narrative, which is a common feature of so-called 'postmodern picturebooks' (Lewis 2001). The other pigs also escape their fate and together they fly away on a page of the story folded into a paper aeroplane and 'visit' other nursery rhymes and fairy-tales.

The analogy I am making here is of the philosophy-teacher 'pig' who steps out of the narrative of the history of philosophical ideas and re-presents the 'central' ideas systematised under what counts as philosophy. The philosophical novel is a model (noun) here in the sense that it is an 'object' that expresses the history of philosophy. In the next picture

[1] For a further discussion see below.



Fig. 1 The Wolf eats the pig and *at the same time* blows the pig out of the story

(see Fig. 2), to continue the analogy, the philosophy teacher pigs examine and walk through the pages of the 'great works' of philosophy (i.e. of course the way I read this story in the context of this article).

Images in this picturebook refer to well-known nursery rhymes (e.g. *The Cow jumped over the Moon*) and story characters (e.g. knights, dragons) representing children's literature. Of course, this is always a selection based on more or less conscious, implicit or explicit criteria. Any selection of what counts as 'central', or what represents the history of a particular field is contentious. Similarly, my visual analogy with Wiesner's picturebook, serves to illustrate that Lipman's choice of philosophers and philosophical ideas from the vast history of philosophy is contentious, though not necessarily arbitrary.

With Lipman's and therefore P4C's epistemological and ontological roots in Plato's rationalism and American Pragmatism, his preference for Anglo-American philosophy is understandable and justifiable. But his selection of what to include and exclude in the P4C curriculum has turned some philosophers (e.g. in Germany), who otherwise might have been interested in the P4C curriculum, against it (see e.g. Weber 2011). The 'second-generation' P4C scholars referred to at the beginning would most likely include different selections of philosophers and philosophical ideas—philosophers also from the Continental tradition of Western philosophy.

So, the P4C curriculum is evaluative and prescriptive (in the sense of what counts as philosophy and what needs to be appropriated by the learners) and therefore normative and not a mere 'description' as De Marzio claims it is (see his quote above).



Fig. 2 The pigs examine the stories that re-present the history of philosophy

Now why is this important? The choice of philosophical content that is implicitly or explicitly contained within educational material for teaching philosophy positions the teacher within the philosophical tradition. Therefore teachers need an academic background in philosophy when they use the P4C curriculum so they can recognise (and resist) their own positioning and also use this knowledge to inform their teaching. The philosophical novels themselves—even when used in conjunction with the accompanying manuals—are therefore not sufficient for the teaching of *philosophy*, which requires the ability to position the particular philosophies drawn on in educational material.[2] Such teachers are unlikely to be able *to draw independently on a range of philosophies*. The danger is that without prior philosophical knowledge, they may introduce a philosophy curriculum such as the P4C programme in an uncritical manner—'the' philosophy is spoon-fed to the teacher and drip-fed to the students.

Texts, including philosophy books and picturebooks, always express certain ideologies, moral values, epistemological assumptions, implicit theories of childhood and aesthetic beliefs. The choice of one text over another is also normative, in that it prescribes what philosophy *is*. The role of the teacher is to be primarily skilled and philosophically aware enough to be able to take a meta-cognitive distance from this implied normative framework herself, before she can make room for students to deconstruct the implied ideologies by themselves. As I will argue below, a teacher needs to actively encourage students to interrogate texts—especially when they have been specially written for philosophical teaching. As Burbules warns: 'those modes of dialogue that put the greatest emphasis on criticality and inclusivity may also be the most subtly co-opting and normalizing' (Burbules 2000, p.15).

The focus of this article is on showing how the training of teachers in the use of philosophical novels as texts for the teaching of philosophy is neither necessary, nor sufficient to develop higher-order philosophical thinking, or what Lipman himself calls 'complex thinking'—without paying more attention to the philosophical background of the

[2] It does not follow that the activity is therefore not educationally worthwhile in e.g. teaching important thinking skills and tools, such as making distinctions, giving examples, offering good reasons, asking probing questions, but for teaching to be philosophical more is needed, i.e. a necessary condition is thinking about thinking (meta-thinking). This is what Lipman calls complex thinking (see below in the main text) and what he claims the novels make possible.

teacher. Complex thinking he defines as a kind of meta-thinking about methodology, assumptions, points of view, bias and prejudice (Lipman 1991: 23, 24). This would involve the possibility (if we follow De Marzio's line of thought) that the *text itself* (with training in how to use this text) enables students to do what the pigs do, that is, take up a meta-narrative perspective. What I propose is that *more* is needed than the use of such specially written material—they are not 'teacher-proof', that is, they need teachers who are open to the possibility that (also) philosophical knowledge is *emergent* and that *this* position I *now* express is *my* philosophical choice (out of many other possibilities). For Luce Irigaray (quoted in Haynes and Murris 2012, p.224) to recover the *philo* involves:

> to listen in a dimension in which I do not assume that I already know you or what your future is. It is to listen with an encouragement towards the unexpected, towards your initiative and your becoming. It is to listen without presupposition and without explicit demands, with a silence that is a space–time offered to you with no a priori, pre-established truth or ritual.

Irigaray's notion of philosophical listening resonates with that of Evgenia Cherkasova who describes philosophy as 'side-shadowing': never satisfied with the apparent state of affairs philosophy is 'persistent attempts to think-out-of-the-ordinary, think 'otherwise', philosophy aspires to question the very practice of thinking' (Cherkasova quoted in Haynes and Murris 2012, pp. 48–49). For enquiries to be philosophical, specially written philosophical novels do not stand on their own: 'between' child and curriculum is the teacher whose believes about what philosophy is, her philosophical content knowledge, pedagogical skills and 'tact' (Haynes and Murris 2012) are constitutive for the philosophical dimension of the praxis. I agree with Joanna Haynes (2008, p.51) that this is located in places of uncertainty, exploration, possibility and imagination. The constructive role philosophy can play is in 'rearranging, shifting, displacing and reframing ideas and beliefs' (Haynes 2008, p.51), therefore *without* any possibility of offering pre-existing lesson plans or exercises to guide the teaching.

But, we also need to ask ourselves whether what the pigs do is indeed possible. Returning to the analogy, to put it crudely, can we put an 'x' amount of philosophies in a row and chose the one we like best? Or, to put it differently, can we indeed step out of a narrative and take up a meta-narrative point of view? In order to answer this question I will also take a brief look at picturebooks that have been proposed as alternative texts and examine whether they can function as meta-narrative 'tools'. But I will start by exploring the two different ways in which the philosophical novels function as models, the distinctly innovative aspect of the P4C curriculum according to De Marzio and Kennedy.

Texts as Models

De Marzio (2011, p.40) explains how the novels model (now as a *verb* not a *noun*), that is make them work to 'form and fashion the thinking and behavior of its readers'. This is related to the second 'whatness' of the novels—as the content is twofold he says (De Marzio 2011, p.40–43). First, the novels represent not only central ideas from the history of philosophy (model as a noun), but readers are also taught the tools and skills of *philosophising* (model as a verb); philosophical concepts are not taught as facts, but need to be critically and dialogically engaged with through enquiry. A philosophical novel is a model as a verb, because it is a narrative exemplification of a way of thinking and behaving

that learners *and* teachers should follow or imitate in the classroom. In order to provoke philosophical questioning the novels deliberately contain 'the perplexing aspects of natural language that they are bound to encounter in daily life' (Lipman 1988, p.144). There is an ongoing dialogue between the fictional children and their peers, and between those children and adults. The fictional characters in the novels are quite unlike 'normal' children. The novels 'portray the thought process itself as it occurs among children…[and] … depict fictional children giving thought to *their* lives as well as to the world that surrounds them' (Lipman 1988, pp. 186, 187). In a moving tribute to Lipman's work, Kennedy celebrates how Lipman has invented what he calls 'a philosophical literature'. He describes (2011:61) the novel *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* (Lipman 1969) as follows:

> The conversations…are completely abnormal, presented in such a way that they appear completely normal - until one realizes that they aren't at all, or needn't be. Here are children talking about mind and body, about beauty, art and nature, about culture, logic, about authority, about the purposes of education, about religion, science, about inquiry itself, in a completely believably unbelievable - or vice versa - way.

The novels model children who are 'normal', but portrayed as they *should* behave and think if they were philosophers, and as a result in the process of engaging with the text the idea is that students 'develop their own philosophy, their own way of thinking about the world' (Lipman 2003, p.166). But how much ownership do the children indeed have over the development of their thinking? According to Lipman, the aim of P4C is not to turn children into philosophers, but 'to help them become more thoughtful, more reflective, more considerate, and more reasonable individuals' (Lipman quoted in Vansieleghem and Kennedy 2011, p.174). The dialogue structure encourages readers to think critically about issues and arguments raised in the text, to develop their own answers to philosophical questions and to make this thinking more reasonable, for example, by not holding opinions or expressing beliefs that cannot be supported by a set of criteria or reasons. The idea is that teachers themselves also go through a similar process before they can work with the texts in classrooms. Teacher training of the P4C curriculum[3] consists mainly of groups of educators working systematically through the novels in combination with the supporting manuals as starting points for philosophical enquiries. However, little room is made for meta-enquiries that focus on the philosophical and educational issues that shape and constitute the practice. It is possible to discern at least two different kinds of meta-enquiries. The first kind[4] could involve a philosophical dialogue about the dialogue itself (what is happening there and then in class): its procedures, strategic decisions and the facilitation moves by the teacher. The second kind of meta-enquiry is one that involves philosophising about the particular philosophies (epistemology, aesthetics, ethics etc.) that governs the P4C curriculum itself.

[3] For many decades Lipman's Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC) at Montclair State College organises regular international teacher training courses for educators and philosophers in their retreat in Mendham, New Jersey.

[4] This in contrast to socratic dialogues in the Leonard Nelson and Gustav Heckmann tradition. Meta-dialogues are an integral part of the philosophical work. See: Draken (1989), Nelson (1949, 1993, 1994) and Heckmann (1981, 1989). In my own work I introduce meta-dialogues with the help of the 'joker-card' from a pack of cards (an idea from Roger Greenaway; see: www.reviewing.co.uk). Everyone in class can pull the joker when they want to discuss the dialogue itself: its procedures, strategic decisions and facilitation moves by the teacher. The dialogue itself only resumes when the meta-issues have been resolved. The device helps to make the practice more democratic and encourages higher-order thinking.

In the classroom, teachers make space for the children to read short episodes of a novel aloud together and experience the kind of thinking philosophers are exemplifying in their famous writings. They then develop their own questions in response to the text, choose one of them democratically and subsequently build on each other's ideas in what is called a 'community of enquiry'[5]; i.e. the pedagogy that supports the texts. For example, De Marzio (2011, pp. 33–42) uses the passage from the philosophical novel *Elfie* earlier on to illustrate how Lipman's novels offer a unique contribution to the recovery of a lost tradition in philosophy: the role of a text as transformative, in the sense that Lipman has managed to bring about a synthesis between what he calls an 'expository text' and a 'narrative text' (De Marzio 2011, p. 35). Both contain models that are potentially transformative. The expository text, he explains, models a particular mode of rational thinking. The narrative text, in contrast, models creative thinking. Both can be used in this way either intentionally or unintentionally. For De Marzio, the role of the text in P4C is paramount as it needs to model the 'right blend' of rationality and creativity (De Marzio 2011, p. 36). Hitherto, in philosophy teaching the expository text was privileged over the narrative text, and De Marzio stresses how innovative and revolutionary the philosophical novels are.

The expository text is common in traditional education. It introduces the facts about the world as it really 'is', or was, from a third-person perspective. Quoting Lipman, De Marzio explains that the voice of the text is the voice from 'above', the voice that is not from 'within', but from 'without' (like the pigs in Fig. 2) and that this voice sees-all, knows-all, the 'totally rational Other'. It is the voice that is objective, authoritative and legitimates (De Marzio 2011, p. 36). Expository texts are traditionally the most popular and seen as the most reliable means to 'handover', 'pour' or 'give' information and knowledge—to use some common metaphors—about the world-as-it-is to students. Interestingly, there are not only epistemological reasons for this educational preference.[6] Lipman also argues that there are *moral*, or better put *moralising*, reasons, for the preference. It affirms and maintains the social, political and moral *status quo*. Unlike narrative texts, it does not *show* another way of doing and being. But for Lipman it is not the teacher's role to adjust the child to society (Lipman et al. 1980). Hence, the blend of the narrative and the expository

[5] Rather than giving a definition of a community of enquiry, Laurance Splitter and Ann Margaret Sharp invite their readers to visualise a P4C classroom. They describe it as: 'We would see a physical configuration which maximises opportunities for participants—notably, students and teachers—to communicate with one another; a round table format or perhaps a collection of smaller groups… We would see participants building on, shaping and modifying one another's ideas, bound by their interest in the subject matter to keep a unified focus and to follow the enquiry wherever it may lead, rather than wander off in individual directions. We would hear, from students and from teachers, the kinds of questions, answers, hypotheses, ponderings and explanations which reflect the nature of inquiry as open-ended, yet shaped by a logic which has features which are both general and specific to each discipline or subject. We would detect a persistence to get to the bottom of things, balanced by a realisation that the bottom is a long way down. This means, for example, that the members of a community of enquiry are not afraid to modify their point of view or correct any reasoning—their own or that of their fellow members—which seems faulty; and they are willing to give up an idea or an answer which is found wanting' (Splitter and Sharp 1995, pp.18, 19). For practical advice on the establishment of a community of enquiry—physical arrangements, length of sessions, how to set the agenda, and how to conduct philosophical enquiries—see, for example, Murris and Haynes (2002, 2010).

[6] There is no space in this paper to explore what Biesta (2010, p. 496) describes as the assumed simplistic relationship between cause and effect in educational interventions. For Biesta, a representational epistemology is a closed system that assumes a particular deterministic causality between an educational intervention and its effect. A transactional epistemology, on the other hand, is an open system that is relational and not isolated from its environment and the exchange of meaning. A semiotic system that is open to children's own perspectives and to the possibility that children can bring something new into the world cannot rely on texts that model, i.e. represent ideal speech, alone to produce a particular effect.

in the shape of the philosophical novel. For example, the expository 'side' of the extract above from the novel *Elfie* re-presents (i.e. makes present) the particular Cartesian thinking move: *cogito ergo sum* ('I think, therefore I am'), which expresses an ontological and not a causal (psychological) relationship between thinker and what the thinker is thinking about. The creative 'mould' in which this thinking move has been poured is that of a narrative: a girl called 'Elfie' who is thinking (reflectively) about her own thinking.

Using a Foucauldian analysis, De Marzio' claims, the philosophical novel makes it possible for the reader to go 'back to the future', positioning readers on the one hand to experience the truth contained within the text that is a rational system of propositions organised according to formal rules, and whereby the subject of the text has been neutralised (De Marzio 2011, p. 43, 44). Whose voice it is, is irrelevant. On the other hand, Lipman (quoted in De Marzio 2011, p. 46) acknowledges that even an expository text has an implied reader who needs to do the 'work', that is, be transformed by the truths it contains and in the 'ideal dialogical novel' the 'perfect cognitive-affective equilibrium' is achieved when narrative events exemplify the content of the text. And as a result the reader 'becomes modified and transformed, appropriating that very mode of thinking into their own' (De Marzio 2011, p. 46). De Marzio (2011, p. 45) refers to this as the 'metalogical capacity' of the text. For example, when thinking philosophically about what thinking is, the fictional characters (here Elfie) are also engaged in thinking philosophically about thinking. When reading the philosophical novels, readers immerse themselves and become part of the community of enquiry that is the novel. The novels' purpose of modeling the practice of communities of enquiry explains why the fictional characters in the novels are quite unlike 'normal' children. They are 'thinkers', not 'doers'.

The Text as Model for Higher-Order Thinking

A distinction that would have been helpful for De Marzio to make is the distinction between narrative texts that are works of art and texts that use a narrative format instrumentally to pass on a particular educational message: e.g. a moral or epistemological one.

For example, Martha Nussbaum offers in *Love's Knowledge* (1990) an alternative form of philosophical text. She explains (1990, p. 3; my emphasis) that 'style itself makes its claims, expresses *its own sense of what matters*. Literary form is not separable from philosophical content, but is, itself, a part of content—an integral part, then, of the search for and the statement of truth'. The way in which I read Nussbaum is that, she takes De Marzio's argument one step further. For Nussbaum the text itself would need to be in the form of—in her particular case—a love story. It is not just the narrative events that need to model real events about characters in and out of love etc., as 'props' or support for the knowledge content, but the content itself—what love *means*—can be understood only *as a narrative*. In a profound sense the distinction between expository and narrative texts would, in that case, simply dissolve and this has to do with a different conceptualisation of the relationship between rational and emotional, rational and imagination, rational and creative. For De Marzio, Lipman has managed to produce a groundbreaking 'hybrid' of a philosophical text, synthesising the rational and the creative, the rational and the affective, but he sets up a false dichotomy. Nussbaum has simply left the dichotomies behind (see: Haynes and Murris 2012, chapter 5).

Moreover, there is a problem with the claim that the text is a model of philosophical or higher order thinking (De Marzio 2011, p.40). Like the 'drip-feeding' of philosophy to teachers mentioned earlier, it is unclear how the philosophical novels make it possible to

'step out' of the narratives and make its own narrativity the subject of enquiry (i.e. think about the narratives themselves *as narratives*). In other words, are meta-enquiries of the second kind possible? Can the *particular* selection of philosophers, philosophical themes, problems and answers to these problems, by the authors of these texts itself become the focus of enquiries? Can students (and their teachers), like the pigs in Wiesner's story, as a matter of fact say: 'Let's explore this place' and 'OK…just let me fold this up…' as in Fig. 3.

So, do students in class indeed learn the tools and skills to offer something *new*? Or, is the kind of 'scaffolding' that is assumed of a Vygotskyan kind, in that the teacher takes up the role of the knowledge expert who helps the (less knowledgeable) student to move from the 'unknown' to the 'known' (adult knowledge)? Such mediation assumes that the adult educator is always one step 'ahead'. How can texts open up possibilities to think differently about what knowledge is? And who owns and constructs knowledge?

Biesta (2011) offers a powerful twofold critique. First, he argues that the emphasis in the P4C curriculum on reasoning, investigation and conceptual development, with its progression towards truth and knowledge, is more like *scientific* enquiry than *philosophical* enquiry—and this is even the case for the thinking skills involved in 'translation', which is aimed at meaning and understanding (Biesta 2011, p.309). His point is not so much that a clear distinction between the scientific and the philosophical is possible or even desirable, but he suggests that P4C proponents need to be aware that 'the educational use of philosophy appears to be based on a particular conception of the human being' (Biesta 2011, p.311). I translate his second critique to the context of the novels themselves. Biesta is referring mainly to the instrumental use of the practice, but the novels themselves also aim to *form* a particular subjectivity and to position a particular reader.

As elsewhere in his writings (see e.g. Biesta 2006, 2010), he argues that education runs the risk of affirming a particular kind of humanist subjectivity, in that humanism 'posits a *norm* of what it means to be human…before the actual manifestation of 'instances' of humanity' (Biesta 2011, p.312). Before the child has an opportunity to show who or what s/he 'is' and can be, the novels envelope the child as implied reader; the ideal reader is a critical and autonomous one who is socially able and emotionally aware: the perfectly rounded educated person. Biesta suggests that as educators we should instead be 'interested in how new beginnings and new beginners come into the world' (Biesta 2011, p.313). This, he says, cannot be 'a template', and, I would argue—therefore not a text either that serves as a 'model', or a 'representation'. Each individual is unique, following Arendt, not by her or his essence, characteristics or qualities (so it is not a question of identity), but by his or her irreplaceability. Drawing on Levinas, Biesta offers an existential alternative that should resonate with P4C proponents, although the idea of using specially written material for the teaching of philosophy becomes problematic when we take seriously that education should be about making room for bringing something new into the world. The P4C curriculum might make students more reasonable, critical and reflective, but of *what* precisely? The 'whatness' of the novels—the particular selection of modes of philosophical thinking and the particular tools and skills that are 'modelled'—how can *these* in turn become the content of philosophical speculation? How can the novels' normativity and the implied readers it positions become the focus for communities of enquiry? Moreover, is there a text or a particular kind of text that makes room for the unknown, the unexpected, and the unthought-of as yet?

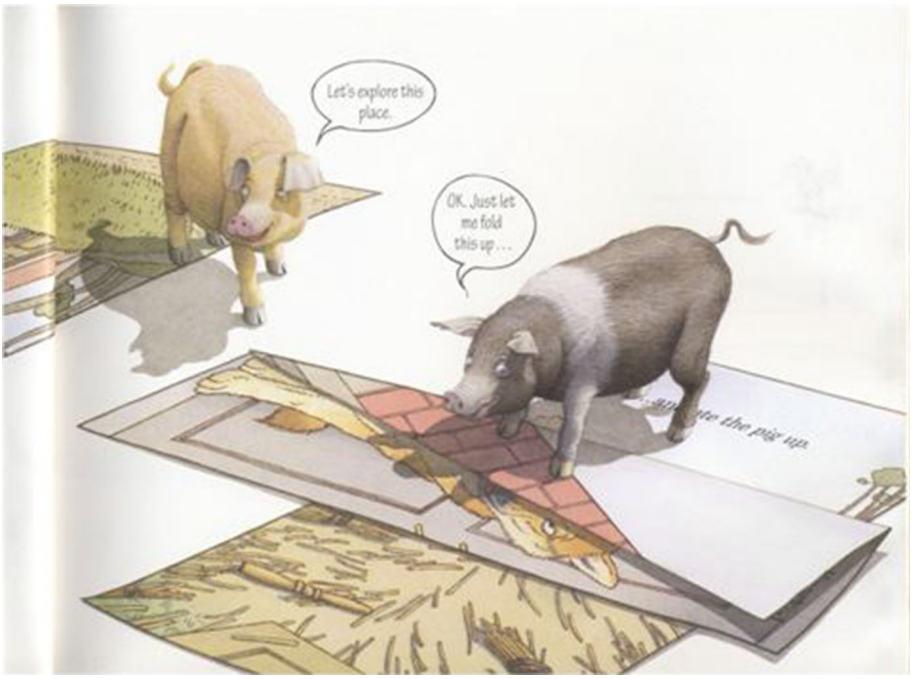


Fig. 3 Can the learners ask the same questions as the pigs? Can they think otherwise?

Children's Literature as Better Alternative Texts?

Lipman's P4C curriculum positions child. As we have seen, Lipman's novels start with the 'abnormal' child, the thinking child—the adult philosopher's child. Matthews' writings have been groundbreaking in validating child's voice in a discipline such as philosophy and his critique of Piagetian developmental psychology, and the recapitulation theory[7] in particular, has paved the way for many others to rethink adults' evolutionary bias in their encounters with children. However, even in P4C, there seems to be little critical awareness of how narratives teach children *how* to be childlike. Adult writers, parents, librarians, educators, literary critics and so on, help define the child outside a book, through the child inside a book. Not only the philosophical novels, but also existing children's literature, perpetuate many adults' assumptions about who and what children are and is therefore never politically innocent. Texts written for children are not only didactic when they encourage children to behave like sensible or thoughtful adults, but in an even more dangerously subtle way, they legitimise and encourage children to behave in a way that—according to some—is 'natural' to children (Nodelman 1999, p.76). A claim often made in the P4C field is that children are 'natural philosophers' (see e.g. Matthews 1978, 1994).

[7] The conceptual confusion is based on the conflation between children's intellectual development and their biological maturation and the mirroring of the development of the species (from 'savage' to 'civilised') with the development of the individual child (Matthews 1994).

The question is whether, and if so to what extent, children's literature would make better texts for philosophy teaching as, for example, pioneered and argued for in the field by Murris (1992), Sprod (1993), Fisher (1996), and Haynes (2008).

Lipman himself argues strongly against the use of existing children's literature, on the grounds that if the aim of education is to 'produce' thoughtful children, then educational material should model thoughtful children, whereas publishers and editors, he claims (Lipman 1988, p.187), deliberately

> exclude thoughtfulness from their depiction of fictional children… [because, in contrast to adults]… children are thought to inhabit a world whose security is ensured by adults, a world into which the threat of problematicity does not intrude, with the result that, under such circumstances, active thinking on the child's part is hardly necessary.

This is his justification for writing philosophical novels which, as we have seen, portray fictional children whose thought processes are made explicit in the novels.

In contrast, many second generation P4C-proponents have now embraced the use of literature for philosophical teaching. Johansson (2011, p.367) suggests that children's literature can help the adult to 'actually enter into the child's world, which is visible in…words and pictures'. As readers, we can only follow stories, he claims, if we are 'able to imagine what the child sees, to enter into the child's fantasy' (2011, p.368). He even goes as far as claiming that picturebooks make it possible 'to attuning ourselves to the practices of the child' and that even reading children's literature by ourselves (not in communication with children) is a way of exploring 'our lives with children'. Johansson seems not aware of how texts construct childhood and how implied readers are positioned through texts (a core idea in a field called 'critical literacy', see e.g. Vasquez 2004; Janks 2010; Pandya and Avila 2014).

Not only the philosophical novels, but also contemporary picturebooks are a part of the intricate ideological web that make cultures what they are: cultures that systematically keep children at a distance from adults. They embody what adults hold dear and what they hold to be 'the' nature of children, or what they want children to become (like adult philosophers in the case of the philosophical novels). Unless given explicit permission, children have become so used to the didactic way in which even contemporary picturebooks are being used by adults that the ambiguity and deliberate 'gaps' opened up by these works of art can be quickly smoothed over to present uniform ally right messages controlled by adults who know more, better and best (Haynes and Murris 2012). This risk is higher when a text is also used, for example, for the teaching of literacy (see e.g. Arizpe and Styles 2003), despite the fact that the indeterminate and ambiguous nature of contemporary picturebooks demands a pedagogy in which teachers do not control what counts as truth and meaning (Haynes and Murris 2012).

In sum, whether specially written or not, resources for teaching can hinder or invite students to meta-think. In *The Three Pigs* the pigs make indeed a meta-narrative move, but the move itself stays within the covers of the book itself. It is *this* meta–meta-cognitive move that cannot be modeled by a text itself as each text requires a 'stepping-out', a critical reflection on the narrative itself in *ad infinitum.* Whether this text is a philosophical novel from the P4C curriculum, or a picturebook makes no significant difference when engaging in the meta-thinking, the meta–meta-thinking, the meta–meta-meta thinking… so characteristic of philosophy, although one text can be more inviting than another to move into unknown, unfamiliar territory for both students *and* teachers.

The Space *in Between*

Biesta offers us an opening which helps to locate philosophy, not in texts themselves, but in the space *in between* text, child reader and adult reader (teacher). He writes about 'exposure' as the quality of human interaction, which 'makes the event of the incoming of uniqueness possible' (Biesta 2011, p.317). It is this kind of philosophy that cannot be mapped out or modelled by the philosophical novels. It could not be; it escapes representation. Therefore, we have to be more modest in our claims about what narratives can do when doing philosophy in class. A pedagogy of exposure involves consciously giving up seeing education as the formation of childhood as well as regarding children as adult opportunities to carry out adults' ideals and to use education as an instrument for such ends (Kohan 2011, p.430).

The process of making sense of a narrative always involves a 'fusion of the contexts of both interpreter and text' and requires a 'relationship of vulnerability to the text' and an attempt to be 'fully open' in the conversation between reader and text (Dunne 1997, pp.105, 115). From the situatedness of such encounters between text and readers it follows that when young people are allowed to participate in such conversations, unique opportunities emerge for different readings of texts, readings that are sometimes extra-ordinary, unusual, or disturbing. After all, writers and readers are embodied temporal beings. Therefore claims to a distanced, objective, meta-narrative perspective on texts are no longer credible.

Anthony Browne's picturebook *Voices in the Park* (1998) is perhaps a better illustration of what a text can do when teaching philosophy. In the story there are four voices each describing an outing to the same park. The choice of images offer four different perspectives reinforced by the use of four different fonts. There is no voice from 'above'—a voice that sees-all, knows-all—like in the picturebook *The Three Pigs*.

The perspective of what it means to be childlike and for P4C-proponents child-philosopher-like is firmly embedded in adult assumptions and desires about how child should be. Philosophical meta-enquiries (and meta–meta-enquiries, meta–meta-meta enquiries…), however, make it possible to discuss such features and to read *against* the text through philosophical questioning. Thus, the role of the *teacher* in complex thinking is paramount, and not the text itself. Therefore, the preparation and education of teachers for philosophical practice should be less focused on induction in set curricula, and more on the acquisition of a wide range of philosophical content knowledge from various traditions *in combination with* the learning of philosophical pedagogical skills and attitudes.[8] The implications are that we need to give up the idea that children represent the opportunity for adults to carry out their ideals and to accept that there is no determined relationship between text, experience and truth. The teacher who is 'exposed' does not scaffold existing truths, but problematises the relationship that both students and teachers have to truths in which they are already installed (Kohan 2011, p.346). The choice of text can hinder or support this experiential process of bringing something new into the world.

[8] People with an education in academic philosophy are not *necessarily* good P4C teachers. The issue is complex as the pedagogical skills that are inseparable from the philosophical praxis are also an expression of a particular philosophical position. The book *Picturebooks, Pedagogy and Philosophy* (Haynes and Murris 2012) is structured around this complexity.

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