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Welcome to the 22nd edition of *Questions*. Our theme this issue is “stories,” which captures the human experience in all its tragedy and glory. Humans have been telling stories as long as we have walked the earth. Stories offer us entrance into reality through fiction and fantasy. And underneath the surface of every story in all its particularity lies universal ideas: truths in fiction.

Our contributors this issue explore the realm of stories, from ancient texts like the mythic stories of the Greeks through contemporary writers from Mikhail Bulgakov to Dr. Seuss. Movies have inspired our writers and we have original stories and poems included to offer readers a wide range of inspiration for reflection.

This issue features high school contributors offering analytical essays, original stories, poems and images. We are international. We have contributions from third graders in Italy and high school students in Turkey and China. Included are several articles by practicing teachers that offer excellent examples of children philosophizing with the help of experienced facilitators. Can a robot be a person? Can a frog be in love? And enjoy a dialogue written by an adult which models inquiry about a tough subject, religion. Finally, two of our editors offer excellent reviews of new texts on philosophy for young people. Both of these books are excellent and I highly recommend them to inspire readers to try new ways to do philosophy and be inspired by Gareth Matthews, one of the “founders” of P4/wC [Philosophy for/with Children.]

As always I am grateful for the dedication and hard work by our editorial board in reviewing the many submissions we received. Sadly we could not accept all of them but we remain so pleased by the overwhelming response and encourage all readers to continue to philosophize and send us your work. I would be remiss if I did not thank the teachers and parents who worked so diligently with their students to discuss important ideas.

Our theme for 2023 is Community so please visit the PLATO website to find out how to submit for the next issue.

—Wendy C. Turgeon
Beyond its satirical critique of atheism in the Soviet Union, Mikhail Bulgakov’s *The Master and Margarita* questions whether people deserve the bad things that happen to them, even if their actions are unrelated to the punishment. The devil, who goes by Woland, ruins the lives of many prominent men in Moscow (although no government figures appear because this was published in the Soviet Union and would have been censored), but none of these men are perfect, and they all make mistakes or have flaws that lead to their demise. Because it is the devil that is punishing these people, the reader is left with the thought that it is unfair. A perfect example is the character Styopa, whom the reader knows to be a bad person and an alcoholic, and who is sent away and loses all his belongings for no other reason than the devil wanted them. He may have deserved this, but it was an expression of the devil’s greed, not a direct punishment for his crimes. Bulgakov manages to make the devil more appealing because of the justice he brings by exploiting people’s greed and desires. The reader doesn’t know whose side to be on, because you have flawed but not inherently evil people who make mistakes, and the devil who is evil and yet seems to be an arbiter of justice. Therefore, the reader comes to question the righteousness of justice if the justice is done for selfish or sadistic reasons and the relationship of justice to a broader context of wrongs.

Having a character, in this case the devil, that is presented as the incarnation of evil, and an irredeemably bad person, makes any sympathy towards him seem wrong, even if his actions could be perceived as good in the right circumstances. A broader way of viewing the previous question would be to look at how important the intentions are as opposed to the results. Another major part of the book is the story of Pontius Pilate and Jesus’ crucifixion. Mattu Levi, in a desperate attempt to save Jesus from the pain of being crucified, kills him. Here, we have the opposite scenario, where a bad act is done for the right reasons. Even then, Mattu Levi isn’t a purely good person, and the reader doesn’t know whether to like him or not. Bulgakov leaves this seemingly unsolvable problem unanswered, with arguments for both sides. The first is that as long as the actions done have a positive effect, the person doing them is in the right, and vice versa. The opposing one is the underlying feeling he gives the reader that what the devil is doing is wrong, and that what Mattu Levi is doing is right. Bulgakov creates an ambiguity between good and evil, with Jesus who thinks that everyone is good and dies for it, and the devil who sees only the bad in people but ends up doing some good things and appealing to the reader. He therefore invites readers to think through what good and evil really are, pushing the boundaries of what common definitions of each word might allow, as well as meditate on the nature of justice.
This piece revolves primarily around the idea of duality and differences. In the center of the piece is a black and white marble like figure resembling ancient sculptures. However, one side is fully formed while the other broken. On the left side of the piece we see rays of light from top to bottom of the figure and on the right we see the two sides of the brain stemming from the broken side of the figure, accompanied by gears on the bottom and butterflies on the top.

When making this piece I kept in mind the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle for inspiration. In Aristotle’s words concerning friendship and love, he depicts a deep understanding and clear answer as to what love is, how it is the greatest good, and that true friendship must be good. This has to do with the unbroken left side of the face along with the rays of sunlight to show how glorified and concrete that perspective is.

On the right side of the piece, concerning the broken edged side with the different sides of the brain is to show how society today understands perspective and how it is quite vulnerable (the brain outside of the head). The gears and butterflies are symbolic to show how there is not much room for imagination rather than scientific views and that the right side of the brain is for the artists (butterflies) and how the left side of the brain is for function (gears). All in all the piece in itself is meant to display the duality and complexity of perspective.

Questions.

How does this image capture the theme of stories? What does it reveal about human creativity?
My name is Baoyue Zhang. People usually call me “Coco.” I am seventeen years old, and I am currently a Junior in The Hun School of Princeton. I came from Shanghai, China, but right now I live in Princeton, New Jersey, in the US.

Recently, a movie came out called “Don’t Look Up.” It describes the story of an astronomy professor, Randall Mindy, who along with his student, Kate, discover an existential comet crisis, and depicts the struggle they faced when they were trying to inform the public about the crisis.

Beside the criticism of the government corruption and allusion to the global warming crisis, I have noticed one idea behind the story which is freedom and free will. Freedom is a central theme for the United States, as we could see from the natural right in the Declaration of Independence and the protection of freedom in the First Amendment. Freedom is a significant part of people’s lives no matter if it is political freedom or freedom in general. As we can see from the story, a lot of those characters just seem to be placed in an involuntary state, especially for Professor Randall Mindy. From the start, he was the person who noticed the comet and tried to inform everyone. However, due to multiple circumstances, he seems to be pushed to be part of the corrupt government system that he hated at first as well. This situation does not seem uncommon, it happens in real life multiple times. That became a question for me, “Do we really have the freedom to choose our life and choose the person we want to become, or does it mean everyone’s life is just part of ‘inescapable fate’?”

I consider the answer that the movie provides to me is a “NO.” In the movie, there is a character who is a billionaire that seems to be able to dominate everything with wealth, including the missile launch project of the US government. Everyone, including the president, follows his orders. At the start, he used his money to create a machine, which implemented the theory of Laplace’s Demon in real life. Laplace’s theory is that after knowing the location and direction of all the atoms in the world, people would be able to predict the future. In the movie, with the machine’s large database, it is able to predict how a person will die. For the whole movie, it only mentioned two predictions. For the first one, it is about the death of the president, in which she will be killed by an unknown creature. That actually became the reality for her by the end of the story. The other prediction is for Professor Murphy; the prediction said that he will die alone. However, that did not become the reality because he died with the accompaniment of family and friends. In the story, he was really close with this so-called “fate,” but maybe because of this acknowledgement, he finally
decided to give up the opportunity to get on the “Noah’s Ark,” and decided to return to his family. That decision made him escape from “fate.” That is the reason why I consider the movie’s perspective to be more inclined with existentialism, especially its idea of radical freedom.

I was shocked when I learned existentialism theory at first because common sense tells us that freedom is what most people pursue, but in this theory, people are afraid of freedom. Since with unlimited freedom, there is nothing that could be determined. This uncertainty stops people from knowing the meaning of life. To avoid it, people tend to fall into bad faith, where people reject other options and consider what they are doing is the only option, by doing so they could provide a certainty for themselves. However, there is always radical freedom, in which they could choose to do other things at any time. It is just like the conversation between Professor Murphy and Dr. Teddy Oglethorpe, the head of the Planetary Defense Coordination Office. When Murphy considered he was forced to do all those things and be part of this political act, Dr. Teddy Oglethorpe said to him, “Man always has choices!”

I did not really focus on existentialism in the past since determinism, the theory that everything is predictable, seems to follow basic causal logic. However, after I finished the movie and after I got a deeper understanding of existentialism, that totally shifted my perspective toward life. In every event that I participated in, rather than think that I was forced to be there, I now know that I subjectively chose to be there. I was not being forced to act good in every subject, but I chose it because of multiple factors, like I want to get good grades and I want to learn new things. This is not enjoyable since it constantly leads you to make decisions independently and have no other reasons to blame. But it pushed me to make careful decisions and take responsibility for the decision. I hope everyone can acknowledge that they do have a choice to pursue the thing they genuinely want, and of course there is cost along with every decision.

**Endnote**
My bus seat was a mess. Packets of printed precalculus problems, a calculator, and pencils cluttered my lap, while I played a balancing act with my laptop. The monotonous school bus bounce shook the past couple hours’ eraser shavings until suddenly, the buzzing ceased. Startled by the abrupt stop, I dropped my pencil and lifted my head and glimpsed the red light above the highway exit. As I watched the teachers at the front of the bus talking, I lowered my noise-canceling headphones to my neck. The world that had been drowned out by music drew color through sound. The students’ banter battered my ears—their breathing heckles, their raucous chants—bringing me out of the reverie I’d swaddled myself in.

"Y’all, get your stuff ready. We’ll be at the cave in five minutes,” Mrs. Jackson, our teacher, announced. Mixed cheers and groans coupled with the rummaging of bags rounded out the remainder of the road trip. After frantically slotting sheets of paper into my binder and stuffing everything into my overfilled backpack, I sat quietly in the decelerating bus. We finally parked, and the creak of the doors beckoned the fleshy flood that bounded through the aisle and out of the yellow giant. I inched out of my seat, down the aisle, and into the open air. The parking lot stood on a hill above the cave. And I peered down the gradient, into the stone’s shade.

Students lined into the cave as ants to their colony. Forced to their knees by the cavity’s ceiling, they crawled along the muddied ground. Orbs of light from atop their heads lit the path. I lowered myself to the ground and clambered along: listening to the cloth and crag resonate. The crawling ceased as we reached a raised roof chamber. We moved quietly as our headlamps lit a cavern slathered with graffiti. We then sat comfortably. “Turn off your headlamps,” said Mrs. Jackson. “The cave will be completely dark—it’s a fun experience.” After the headlamps shut off, the cave was dark—so dark that I could not see the ceiling, nor the walls, nor the very floor that I sat upon. My eyes pulsed in the darkness—heavily like two hearts harbored in my eyelids. I waved my hands in front of my face, but could only feel where they were. The darkness became suffocating, stealing my serenity and sight. Despite the initial panic, my head eased and I grew used to my loss of vision. My ears opened once more. I heard the breath of the students and the cave, a cacophony of rasps and a soft hum. And a whisper. It leaked through the opaque world—from one shoulder to another. And another whisper. It susurrated in the ebony expanse—from one shoulder to another. And a third whisper. Then a fourth. Each whisper birthed two more. But none dared break the sanctity of the cavern with any sound louder. The whispers burrowed through my ears and into my thoughts. The next moment I inched closer to another student and opened my mouth.
Light bore into the stone once more. Illuminated headlamps shone fresh discs of light. New to the eyes, but not troublesome. Returning from the Earth’s orifice, however, was different. Despite how much I watched the rays beyond the tunnel, entering the sun’s land scalded my eyes to a squint. Yet only for a short minute. My eyes had begun to open once more as the dirt below, the rubble around, and the thicket ahead painted into form in front of me. I heard the birds’ trill, the leaves’ sway, the acorns’ plummet. The cars’ race, the leaves’ crunch, and the students’ breath. My travail had ended, and the world bore new displays. Peering up at the sun once more relit my kindled vision. But the sight was alarming: the sun had only nudged afoot, further in the sky. As if leaving a movie theater, time had moved on—leaving but me. I, who was captured in the secluded lifetime. I, who had dreamt cradle to grave. I, who had lost not. The outside world had observed my delivery and welcomed me. In accordance, I welcomed the world. Nature’s current and the students’ chatter hummed in—all the way until I fell again to the darkness of sleep later that night.
It's ordinary for humans to doubt their identity occasionally, especially teenagers. The creation of self, or self-identity, is entirely personal; yet the status quo, informed by external judgment and influence, complicates the internal creation of self. No matter how much an outside force disturbs you, the idea of self should theoretically be developed purely in one's own mind; that is the one true place an individual could think, be, and see. Yet, in situations of conflict, elements of identity imposed by outside forces could indefinitely cause a subject to develop conflicting perceptions of identity.

I really couldn't be me, but rather I had to live a forced image of what an American person would act like.

A fine example of this struggle is found in Dr. Seuss's tale of *The Sneetches*, which exemplifies how the clash between internal and external opinions may cause one to lose the idea of self and eventually change one's way of living to cope with this loss. This children's book is frequently noted as a commentary on equality, racism, and tolerance, but also affords the opportunity to reflect on how we balance a sense of self when facing foreign forces. The story follows the changing of the Sneetches' distinctive characteristics in the pursuit for superiority. The two different classes of Sneetches, the starred and the non-starred, are almost like parts of multifaceted identity. Such as the proud, exuberant side to self, reluctant to change internally, and the diminutive, submissive, conformist side, always thinking about changing, craving for a moment to shine. This difference in identity illustrates the effect a hierarchy based on physical traits could have on the psychological aspects of a particular group.

The arrival of Mr. McBean and his star changer demonstrates how people are willing to do anything for power. When all the Sneetches no longer know who initially had stars, they realize the initial status symbol bears no significant meaning: the result is a harmonious society, but, in a way, all Sneetches lost an integral part of their identity. This is bad for the sense of identity but good for the common well-being. In the end, it is both the outside force (Mr. McBean’s star changer) and the internal (the desire to maintain superiority) that clash to create a loss. The stars themselves bore no meaning, but it was the false attributes of the star that led to confusion and conflict.

The allegory of the Sneetches may have entered into our cultural language in 1953, but its larger ideas about identity permeate today. As a Korean student living in America, I often wonder where I would fall among the Sneetches. Would I be considered star or starless? I’ve frequently navigated how appearances and actions inform my personal perception of belonging and self.

My first boarding school experience in the States somewhat conflicted with my childhood experiences in South Korea. I always thought, maybe it’s my skin color, or my studious na-
ture. Or, perhaps it was how I always took my shoes off before entering my room. Regardless, I was treated differently in comparison to my American friends. On the other hand, back in Korea, I am seen as an ‘alien.’ I’ve gotten ‘do you eat hamburgers every day,’ ‘can you speak Korean well,’ ‘you look very American’ all the time. Sure, I’m not too good at Korean, but being treated like a complete outsider in my home country was devastating. Consequently, the pushing and pulling of my identity forced me to act in specific manners at specific places. I really couldn’t be me, but rather I had to live a forced image of what an American person would act like, or how a Korean would. As a result, I was like a Sneetch going through the constant process of adding and taking off the star. In the end I was left in the middle, but also a part of me was lost.

As I’ve grown older, I’ve reflected more on The Sneetches and its layers. While I appreciate its deep commitment to promoting equality, the question arises about how each Sneetch feels about their individual actions. Others might not be able to recognize who began with a star and who did not, but the individual surely must remember because they made the active choice to add or subtract their identifying feature. As someone who has faced pressures to assimilate into new communities, I had trouble navigating who I truly was. What do I hold on to and what do I let go? I found myself thinking about the positive attributes in the starred Sneetches. Their narcissism was undoubtedly unwarranted, but they had pride in who they were. I found myself feeling great empathy for the Sneetches and what they lost as a result of Mr. McBean. The book was a moment to reflect upon myself. While I was re-reading the tale, the story retold my inner struggle perfectly. Dr. Seuss’ masterpiece made me wonder, ‘Who am I?’ on a greater scale than ever. This was a longer process of understanding, rather than realizing and seeing. Progressively, there was a certain beauty to laying back and trying to understand why I was the way I was. Once I looked back on myself, I slowly built up the courage to have this pride in myself. Yes, it’s about building. This type of human behavior doesn’t come instantly, but rather sneaks itself into life- building, growing bigger, as I understand myself. Hence, I was able to conclude that as long as you’re proud of yourself, you should never have to worry about the judgment that goes on outside in the world.

**Endnote:**
“Desiring-production” could be called the foundational concept in the work of philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1925–1995), and psychoanalyst Felix Guattari (1930–1992). They put it to use in discussions of literature, ecology, and political theory: in every instance using it to show how people, or systems, acquire desires. The writing of Marcel Proust (1871–1922), especially his magnum opus, *In Search of Lost Time*, are used at length in Deleuze and Guattari’s two collaborative works, *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. Deleuze felt that great writers, though not exactly philosophers, were also great thinkers: people who could recognize the intricacies of experience, and comment on how experience was being misunderstood by other thinkers. In this article I’ll look at the interplay between Deleuze and Guattari’s theoretical concept of desiring production and an instantiation of this concept in *Swann’s Way*, the first volume of Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*.

We can contrast desiring-production with the dominant theory of desire in Deleuze and Guattari’s 70’s France—the theory put forward by psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis conceives of desire as lack: that one’s desire can be described as a void which can only be filled, or satiated, when the object of desire is acquired. But the first thing Deleuze and Guattari take up is the question of the “object’s” existence at all—is there really a single, irreducible, “thing” which we desire. No, they say. All “objects” of desire are actually interconnected deeply, forming a web of associations and relations without which no object would be desirable. We see this in Proust. The character Swann is introduced to Odette, a young woman who at first he claims to dislike, and find ugly, but soon he is reintroduced to her again. This time at an aristocratic salon where a pianist plays a sonata for the party. From this moment, he begins to desire her more. He sees in her likeness a mural by Botticelli, and, most importantly for the story, he associates her with the upper-class salon he is trying to impress.

Psychoanalysis conceives of desire as lack: that one’s desire can be described as a void which can only be filled, or satiated, when the object of desire is acquired.

This is not just literature for Deleuze and Guattari, this is a particular instantiation of a universal principle, namely, that desire is a productive act. “There are no philosophical concepts that do not refer to non-philosophical coordinates” Deleuze says in his 1989 interview with Claire Parnet. What, in fact, the character Swann desires is not a woman at all; it’s an assemblage of things, all which circle around and involve Odette, but his desire is not reducible to her. This is what all desire is for Deleuze and Guattari, the constant production of these assemblages. The reference to factories, machines, and labor are neither accidental nor metaphorical. Deleuze and Guattari make
clear that there is no metaphor in “desiring-production” or “desiring-machine”; their terminology picks out exactly what they mean. Like all mechanical production, all desire takes basic “materials” (memory, experience) and through certain logics (like those of the lover, schizophrenic, depressive) these materials are connected, producing desire.

The reliance on literature (through style, character, and stories) in the work of Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari, demonstrates a dramatic shift in method in the history of philosophy. For Deleuze, all experience should be experience philosophy can derive insight from—and with the writer’s especially perceptive eye towards experience, the writer should be in lock-step with the philosopher.

Endnotes


5. Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari and Michel Foucault, Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia (New York: Penguin, 2009), 36.

Editors’ Favorite Stories

Boodil My Dog

BY PIJA LINDENBAUM

A picture book where the images tell a story that challenges the text. The love of the girl for her dog shines through but does love blind us to the truth?

—Wendy Turgeon
Our stories make up who we are, and our experiences constitute these stories. Stories and experiences are both part of the intangible realm. Naturally, the question of whether we own such intangibles arises. In fact, I believe that true ownership applies to the intangible alone. In the tangible universe, there exists mere possession, which is likely temporary, but that does not qualify for ownership. In the intangible world, ideas are generated and stored in the mind. One’s identity is a manifestation of the intangible. Thus, to be oneself, one must own the stories and experiences that make up this sense of self, and to be part of the world means to be part of a global story.

Many Indigenous practices spring from the respect for and preservation of the lands on which they prosper.

Objects in the physical world are prone to be lost. I own a pair of sunglasses, so, even if I am to argue that I have purchased the sunglasses so it should be possessed by me, once I lose them, I do not own them anymore. Likewise, when one is robbed of money, as much as that money could rightfully belong to this individual, it no longer is possessed by him/her. Thus, instead of ownership of tangible goods, there exists a mere possession of them for the duration during which we hold on to them through means of purchase or charity. However, once our term expires, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, our possession of them ceases to continue. At best, ownership of physical items does exist at the hands of society at large, since, even when an individual loses possession of an item, it circulates into the general society for it to enjoy. Hence, because there is no individual ownership over tangible objects, one’s stories cannot be framed by physical objects. These objects can serve as details, like plot points in literature, that make up stories without disturbing the latter’s overarching themes. In fact, it could be argued that all tangible objects are made from existing earthly materials. Before human civilization, no individual owned these sources, so the existence of humanity does not prove its ownership over existing resources. Thus, some stories are universal, and they belong to the world: those of the trees’ growth, those of the planets’ orbits, those of the crickets’ songs. However, individual stories with these elements of nature are unique and belong in the intangible.

The intangible universe is where our stories are formed, told, and cemented. Intellectual property, the most common form of an intangible item, is created and stored within a mind, and that makes all abstractions stored owned by the individual who generated the abstraction. These intangible variables ultimately make up one’s personal identity, which comprises his/her hobbies, emotional states, sense of being etc.

An obvious argument against my position would claim that every individual’s thoughts and opinions are amalgamations of other peo-
people’s ideas; thus, there exist no pure ideas, no pure stories, so there cannot be singular ownership of a combination of ideas. However, individuals are capable of independent thinking, which means the opinions of their influences will not directly translate into their own thoughts. Different people can witness the same phenomenon, but the stories we tell from it are unique.

However, there are times when our stories are shared. A notable example is the intersection between stories of many Indigenous cultures, which emphasize oral traditions, and those of nature. Many Indigenous practices spring from the respect for and preservation of the lands on which they prosper. Thus, their stories are ones detailing their relationships with nature, and these accounts, which place humans and nature as equals, are shared. Too often do we overlook mutually-beneficial stories. In the case of our bond with nature, we tend to yearn for a dominating relationship that, over time, tears nature apart. Consequently, the stories deriving from these premises are almost wholly ‘owned’ by humans. In light of recent efforts to battle climate change and the destruction these one-way relationships have caused, we are reminded of the Indigenous approach to our place in the world. We need not subdue ourselves beneath any entity, but we do need to consider nature as equals, like how the Romantics might have framed it. This way, our stories can be used as a force for progress, which, ironically, is a shift back to how the world used to operate: on mutually beneficial grounds.

In conclusion, our stories establish our unique identities and are able to be held onto for as long as our minds and/or legacies persist. We hold our stories because of the experiences we have gone through, and such experiences can be mutual so that we work towards crafting a story of the world—a story shared by all.

References


David Xia is a sixteen year old grade eleven student at St. George’s School in Vancouver, BC, Canada. His interest in philosophy sprung from his participation in a Stanford Summer Humanities Institute session ‘The Greeks and Beyond’ with Professor Christopher Bobonich. Since then, he has founded a Philosophy Club at this school to translate his interests into action.

Editors’ Favorite Stories

Comet in Moominland, Tales from Moomin Valley and Moominpapa at Sea

BY TOVE JANSSON

These explore such themes as the good life, solitude, and free will

—Stephen Miller
“There was once a little girl.”
“I should start like this, right?”
He laughed.
“The little girl loved to imagine and to sing
and the smell of cinnamon.”
He continued without taking his eyes off her.
“One day, the little girl decided to live an adven-
ture and in the early morning she left the house
with her dog.”
She was smiling slightly. She felt like she could
not talk, not at that moment. Her smile was
shadowed by melancholy and the bitterness of
distant memories.
He saw this. He felt what she was feeling.
He was looking at her eyes. She had his eyes.
He was examining the slight movements of her
eyelids. She had his eyelashes.
“That little girl doesn’t live anymore. She
breathed in a past, but that past is lost in time.
At the present, she is nothing more than a dusty
silhouette.”
Her voice was like a whisper. As if she was afraid
to hear her own voice. As if every word coming
out of her mouth was hurting her. Strangling
her throat, burning her lips.
“This is not true.”
“Since when have you believed in the
existence of truth?”
“Since when have you believed in the
existence of time?”
“Are you running away? Again?”
“I have never run away from anything in my
life.”
“Leaving an unfinished story equals running
away from the rest of it.”
“All stories remain unfinished.”
“Is this the reason why you are questioning my
understanding of time? Do you believe I could
forget your absence? That you haven’t been
there for me for fifteen years?”
Silence filled the room.
Dust particles were fluttering under the dim
light. The room was covered in dust. Her hair,
the bouquet of dandelions on the wooden table
and the photos lying on the ground were cov-
dered in dust.
Their heartbeats echoed in the silence of the
room.
The dust was covering the time which was be-
coming more and more distant, almost nonex-
istent, an invisible fog separating the little girl
from her.
He cleared his throat.
“That little girl is here. She is you. She is im-
mortal.”
His voice was soft. Covered in the dust of the
last decade.
“No, I have not been her for a very long time.
Besides, no one is immortal. Time transforms
everything, constantly, and at the end every-
thing is transformed into soil, which is death
given by time.”
“Time? What is this thing you are so obsessed
with? It must be one of God’s forms for you.
However, if I remember correctly, that little girl
didn’t believe in God. She liked asking ques-
tions about everything. This was her game.”
“Are you comparing time to God, which you
have no faith in? Time is the most powerful
thing in the universe. You can’t change, save or stop it. Just as you can’t make me forget that you left home and that little girl a long time ago.”

“I’m telling you that I don’t believe in time. Something that doesn’t even exist cannot change anything.”

“You don’t believe in time. Nor do you believe in God. What is the power behind all the changes then?”

“I don’t believe in changes. I mean, the irreversible changes in which you believe so obstinately. The idea that everything exists just for the smallest unit of ‘time’ and then disappears. Becomes another thing. I don’t believe that our existence has the form of a road, which once you walk you cannot return or look back on.”

“Are our lives a circle, then? Eventually, we return to where we began, we become again the person who we were at the very beginning. Perhaps, we don’t move at all. Even the change of seasons is an illusion that we make ourselves believe in, in order to be able to continue. Continue to hope. To wait. To love. To live.”

“I don’t believe in the act of returning. If you are returning somewhere, this means that you are not there at that moment. You are, however.

I don’t believe in the act of becoming. If you are becoming something, this means that you were not that thing at the beginning. You were, however.

I do not believe in time because I do not believe in separate particles of life floating in the universe. Some consumed and the rest untouched. Lined up in a queue and waiting for their turn to come. It does not matter if this queue takes the form of a circle or a triangle at the end.”

“Then, is everything a knot for you? An accumulation of images and sounds? Everything happens at the very same moment. And the moment is no longer a unit of time. As there is no time. You are every form of yourself. Each form of things exists at the same moment, and constantly, forever.

I do not agree with this point of view. I know that you left me. I didn’t see you for years. You had not been with me for years. Denying the existence of ‘years’ won’t change this. I felt your absence. I suffered. Saying that all those years are happening as we are talking now, won’t change my memories.”

Her eyes were shining with tears. Her cheeks were rosy. She felt nauseous.

He saw the sparks in her eyes. He remembered seeing those eyes in a mirror. He remembered that young man who he had been before and he would always be, eternally.

“I sincerely believe that life is a cup of black coffee.” He said with a smile.

“With no before and no after. But also made up by before and followed by after. Without a present. Or with an eternal present. Past, present and future, all together, fluttering in the sunshine. Illusory, meaningless movements of colorful images.

Everything is happening together at the same time. Whole our life is happening now. Fifteen years ago is happening now. I didn’t leave you. I am leaving you now and I am finding you.”

Silence enveloped the room.

Editors’ Favorite Stories

Milk and Cookies

BY FRANK ASCH

What is the relationship between perception and reality?
Can we fear something we know is not real?

—Alexandra Chang

For book cover see page 50.
The act of living, as we know it, has always been a gamble from the start. Cards are distributed blindly at birth, and it's up to each person to manipulate their reality, their hand, in this game we call life. Upon wake, each human is placed in a branch of a tree we call society. Lucky people can find themselves at the top, gazing at the luminous sky, flowering when the Sun blesses them with a smile. Unlucky people on the other hand, are born to the lowest of the branches, and they have to deal their cards carefully in order to rise and meet the eyes of the same Sun who smiles effortlessly from the top.

Now, when a card deck is bought, people expect to be handed fifty-four cards, even though if asked the number of cards in a deck, they would answer “fifty-two cards” without hesitation. The two extras they have the audacity to miscount are unmistakably the Jokers. But isn't that peculiar? Aren't those two from the same box? The same manufacturer? The same material, marked with the same ink? Then how can one ever imagine a deck without the Jokers?

Each card deck that has ever been created had the additional two jesters next to the hierarchical bunch. Just like in the tree of life, each deck has a form that resembles a pyramid. The royalty of the deck, the Ace, the King, the Queen and the Jack sit on top, and the rest of the numbers descend accordingly. All cards
have a place in their respective trees of Clubs, Diamonds, Hearts, and Spades. And each forest is colored within the rules of the table. Which means, every single card is unique and although there are similar ones, none of them are the exact same. Sounds a lot like humans, doesn’t it?

It’s all good and well within the family of those infamous fifty-two cards, but what about the Jokers? That’s where things get tricky. Most people will argue that in the value count, the Ace is higher than the King, but even so, according to some people the count starts with the King and ends with the Ace. But nobody can even think about placing the Jokers to the count. And it’s simply because their values are fluid and ever changing, one game at the top, winking at the Sun, the next game they are fallen to the ground and cursed by the rest. Which means that they will never be a part of the tree. But they don’t have to. They can be substitutes to any branch when needed, or they can burn the whole tree down, resulting in a losing situation. In some games where the Jokers are added, they can be used as decoys, life savers, fatalities or golden tickets of the victory. But in the hands of a master of said game, no matter what their in-game values may be, they are priceless. These are the rare players who know that if one loses sight of the rest of their hand and is blinded by the card they deem worthy or worthless, completely undermining the potential of said card, they will burn down and scatter to the groud with their desires, taking the rest of the cards down with them.

Which means, in this game we call life, the markings don’t define values. Just as the lowest can rise up, the most favored can spiral down. What matters is the moves we make during our run, because life is a one card game, and we’re bound to play it until the end.

Editors’ Favorite Stories

The Important Book

BY MARGARET WISE BROWN

Does everything have an essence that makes it what it is? Do you?

—Christiane Wisehart
see: how we move sluggish and shadowed through this world.

listen: behind every bandaid is a half-inked memory
of violence. and behind every memory the haze-hardened sound of hands cracking
open. maybe it’s the moon-drunk air, maybe it’s the asthma, but something
about this place makes us feel like dreams, hollowed
with potential and waiting to be rediscovered. listen: maybe we’ll find the body
at the center of this watermelon. maybe we’ll discover the chill
of a staircase in winter morning light, creaking dizzily at our touch. maybe it’ll be nothing,
but it’s okay because life is a dream, and we’re doing our best
to fill it. listen: we are looking for a place to plant our roots. we are digging deep
through cyan-sickened soil and finding a place where the stale stories of yesterday cannot reach.
we are flirting with the idea of being buried for these sins, or at least passing
together through the slick film of history. my friend, my mirage,
in the glass between our fingertips we are no longer afraid. the body is only as beautiful
as what it touches. in the cleaved snapshot of a rind caving
into two, we are tending to a garden of weeds in the valley
of a hand sharpening into static, together. and time cannot touch us now.

Portrait of a Watermelon in Technicolor

EMMA CHAN
Senior, Kent Place School, New Jersey
The photo is based on *Romeo and Juliet*. The mask is meant to resemble how they meet at a dance. I also added a postcard with flowers and a skull behind everything to resemble life and death. The ideas of life and death are some of the main themes in *Romeo and Juliet*, which is why I chose those symbols.

LAURA FOSNOCHT, Freshman, Kutztown Area High School in Kutztown, PA
“I know who I WAS when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then.”
—Lewis Carroll, Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, 1865

Alice is Socrates, one who knows all yet knows none. While cakes and drinks change her size, through the looking glass, I sit and ponder my own metamorphosis, my thoughts coming up empty yet limitless. Am I my physical body? How can I be when my cells replenish every seven years? Even from this morning, I am not the same biologically. Should I be looking at this question more philosophically? Am I who those around me perceive me to be? A girl who dove down the rabbit hole of philosophy, and constantly questions her own wonderland? There is so much they do not see, they cannot know the true me. For it is I who knows myself (mostly) through these changes. Who better to decide than me? I can be mad as a hatter thinking through morality with my brain scattered. This morning I was a philosopher and that way I shall stay, No matter how many queens challenge me to play croquet.
Seeing Mrs. Dalloway in Me and You

LYANNA CHEN

11th grader, Shenzhen Middle School, China

“Mrs. Dalloway said
she would buy the flowers herself.”
The life she lives is boring,
faked, lonely, never-ending
for she has made the choice—
to live in prestige, to hold a party.
Where’s the childhood passion,
the love for a brave man,
the treasured kiss from Sally?
Where’s Clarissa? The young girl
from the past, the ardent girl
from her heart.
The soul. Free or confined?
Learn music and become “poor,”
Or finance and become “rich?”
Is there another story
where Clarissa said she would
be herself, where I said I would
be myself, where you said you would
be yourself.
Take one day to feel
the choices regretted,
the life not lived.
And the masquerade party?
Is your choice to make.
Tears of Icarus

KAYRA YILDIRMAZ

11th grader, Sainte Pulchérie French High School, Turkey

A single droplet of tear
marks his cheek
long before the wax on his shoulders
marks his death
for helios is beautiful
but freedom even more so
a longing so pure
it calls for a feast
for the life and youth
of this very beast
a familiar voice in his head
“don’t fly too high,
and don’t fly too low,
the wax may melt
and the feathers might fall”
icarus, he had said, don’t do anything stupid
for everybody has limits
but what are limits
to the foolishness of gained divinity
too late, icarus thinks
wax burns into his skin
death caresses his cheek
yet helios is still beautiful
the smile vanishes,
one tear turns into many
the once brave young boy will now forever be
a cautionary tale for many.
Philosophy in Verse

Written by students of the third grade of primary school, section L; age 8/9;
I. C. Giuseppe Scelsa, Palermo, Italy
at the end of their P4C course where they met first Lucio’s story and then Tina and Amir’s one.

We are little explorers
Brave thinkers
We want to tell you
About the adventure of thinking.
If you want to travel with us
In your backpack you must bring
Memory to remember
The heart to be excited
The mind to philosophize.
Lucio taught us
You mustn’t be jealous
Because everyone is valiant
And if you want to find out
That it’s good to be joyful
Use your sympathy
To get into empathy
What will empathy be?
Love others and their quality.
But let’s look at reality:
We are Italians, Ukrainians and Russians . . .
People of all nationalities
But what does it matter?
Everyone has their own identities!
Tina and Amir told us
So many stories that fascinated us!
And on reflection we learned that
Respect for the other, for identity and freedom
Give happiness!
If you don’t want to leave a friend
In addition to profit and pleasure
You must think of his good.
And if you want to give him something
You can show him your affection
We want to give you some advice:
If you meet someone who isn’t nice
But is a spoilsport and like a plague
That talks about our private things
And ruins our days
Listen to me carefully, you have to help him
Because we all want to be together!
You have to teach him kindness
And that violence brings ugliness
And you have to show respect for all
Helping them with joy and affection.
We understood that in a video game
You can play a war game
But in reality you can’t joke with war
If you don’t want to start a war
With your mouth you have to speak
With your brain you can think
But you must always listen to your heart!
If you don’t want to become a robot
You have to use your brain.
Robots have no feelings
Because they are not living beings
At the end of our trip we found out
That doing philosophy
Helps democracy.
Let’s listen, let’s look at others and sit in a circle
As in a mirror.
Together we reflect and
We feel like little adults
We little ones have to hope
That the world can improve
And we can only advise you
To always perform good actions
To receive great satisfactions!
References:

Lucio is the protagonist of an Italian philosophical novel for little children in Nardone, Stefania. *Il re della foresta* Napoli, Liguori Editori, 2011.

Tina and Amir is a philosophical novel from the European P.E.A.C.E. (*Philosophical Enquiry Advancing Cosmopolitan Engagement*) curriculum, downloadable for free at https://peace.kinderphilosophie.at/.
Is Creating a Neo-Utopian Society a Realistic Possibility?

YAN JOHNSON

Eighth grader, Fisher’s Junior High school, Indiana
One of the earliest ideas of how to create an ideal society dates back to Plato. In his “Republic” and “Laws” he discusses how to create an ideal society. One of the main questions in the “Laws” is how to produce the citizens that have complete virtue. One of the ways to do it is through education. The goal of those educational institutions would be to teach citizens how to feel pleasure and pain correctly. Those institutions would promote virtues like courage, resisting pleasures, and directing the citizens to the desire of love of being a perfect citizen that rules and is ruled by justice.

Another example of an ideal society is “Utopia” by Thomas More. More thought that to make utopian society possible it would be necessary to improve quality of life for people. This would destroy the vices and make crime unnecessary. Another main feature in More’s “Utopia” is commonly held property. The society is based on the state of nature where everyone has access to the nature’s fruits.

I think it is possible to use some of the ideas of utopian society and create a society that is close to the ideal but not absolutely ideal. For example, I see education as a powerful tool in directing peoples’ values and priorities. Education can teach people how to be an ideal citizen not because they are afraid of punishment but because it would help them feel good about themselves that they can be good citizens. Education can also create such values as moderation and desire to help others.

If they are educated to be ideal citizens, they can view it as their duty to help those who are not as privileged as they are. If people are forced to become ideal citizens, then this utopian society would not work. They would be ideal citizens out of fear of punishment. Since fear is a negative emotion, the people would be motivated by negative emotions. However, negative emotions cannot ever secure a commitment. And being an ideal citizen is a huge commitment. But positive emotions can help a person keep commitment.

Another step in creating utopian society is to take all the cultures of the world and strip them of their bad parts, find the good parts and put all of them together. I think it’s possible to

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Hate cannot drive out hate only love can do that.
—Martin Luther King Jr
convert people into ideal citizens with kindness, love and peace, not through force. We can still give people the right to make their own choices. But at the same time we would give them so much love and light that they will see what is right and choose to convert to ideal citizens.

It is like Martin Luther King Jr said:

Darkness cannot drive out darkness only light can do that.
Hate cannot drive out hate only love can do that.

I also think globalization should be a part of neo utopian society. I believe the countries should have borders, but it should be possible for people to migrate without passports. If we are to create a utopian society, then we must work hard at making it an ideal society.

References

Editors’ Favorite Stories

Harold and the Purple Crayon
BY CROCKETT JOHNSON

Is make believe the same as reality?
Does it matter?
—Janice Moskalik
A Philosophical Video-Dialogue

PATRICIA DÍAZ-HERRERA

Universidad Autónoma de la Ciudad de México

From March 2020 to December 2021, there were no face to face classes in most elementary schools in Mexico. With this in mind, I organized an online P4C workshop. Thanks to my sister, who works as an elementary school teacher, I got in touch with four girls and one boy aged seven to nine years old. I met them by video conference several times during the summer of 2021. Two girls live in Mexico City, while the boy and the other two girls live in the southern state of Morelos. My objective was not to teach traditional lessons but to engage them into a philosophical dialogue adapting the methodology of the community of inquiry and using a variety of resources. This was a challenge for me because it was the first P4C workshop I did in an online setting. I did not know what to expect concerning their reactions and level of participation. I assumed they were going to be shy or tired of remote interaction.

In the first session the kids identified the differences and similarities between children and robots. Some of the philosophical issues that can be introduced with this comparison are the definition of a person, the ontological and moral status of a robot, and the concept of friendship. When I planned that session, I considered relevant literature on philosophy for/with children, for example Ann Margaret Sharp’s novel The Doll Hospital, and the companion teacher’s manual Making Sense of My World, by Sharp and Laurance Splitter.¹ Sharp and Splitter include exercises and activities about the differences between a person and a doll, personhood and friendship. However, for the first session I didn’t use a text because I thought audiovisual resources would be more effective to keep the kid’s attention throughout the video-conference. Besides, I agree with Thomas Wartenberg’s arguments concerning the advantages that picture books have as stimuli for philosophical discussions.² Some songs, videos and games can have these advantages as well. And I wanted to design a playful session, not too formal.

I divided the session in three sections with the following structure: First, a general introduction to the topic; second, a dialogue about an illustration and its implications; third, an application of their conclusions to a real story about a robot working in a school. In each section we used a different material, so in total we explored three materials:

- **Section 1**: A video of the song “The Robot Boy” interpreted by Hermanos Rincón, a Mexican musical ensemble that composes music for children.³

- **Section 2**: One card of *I, Person*, the picture book by the philosopher Ellen Duthie and the illustrator Daniela Martagón.⁴

- **Section 3**: A story in the news about a real robot called “Benebot.”⁵

I agree with Thomas Wartenberg’s arguments concerning the advantages that picture books have as stimuli for philosophical discussions.
The questions I asked were oriented to promote critical, creative and careful thinking abilities. I never told them there were “right” or “wrong” answers, since facilitators should focus on promoting the children’s own ideas and arguments. Otherwise, we would not encourage their autonomous thinking. I used some of the questions included in the Spanish version of the picture book _I, Person_, and I formulated other questions as well. I wrote down the questions in pieces of paper. During the session I pulled them out of the mouth of a robot doll I created from a cardboard box. Puppets are useful resources in P4C not only to keep them interested but also to generate confidence so they can express themselves.⁶

**The Robot Stories, Questions and Reflections**

The three materials are stories about a robot interacting with people or in a school. As an introduction, we listened to the song “The Robot Boy.” The lyrics describe a Robot Boy who asks his grandmother to wind him up so he can go to school. His grandmother oils, kisses and combs him. He is happy and goes marching to school. He has a small machine in his metal chest which makes noise—a metal heart, perhaps.

I transcribe the questions I asked them and some of their reflections:

- **Can a robot go to school? Why or why not?**

Girl 1: No, because he stops and needs winding up again after two classes.

Girl 2: He’ll stop after a few steps.

- **Are children and robots alike? What are the differences?**

Boy: A robot is not alive. He has no feelings. It’s a piece of iron and wires.

Girl 1: The robot is a toy. A robot and a boy are not similar in any way.

Girl 3: A robot can be separated in pieces but a boy can’t.

Girl 4: Robots have no flesh or bones.

- **How do you know you are not a robot?**

Girl 1: I am not made of metal.

Boy: I was born from a mother. The robot was born from iron.

After this preparation, I showed one card of the picture book _I, Person_. Duthie and Martagón have created several picture books which they classify as “visual philosophy for children.” Their books are formed by independent cards in a box. Each card has an illustration on one side and a discussion plan on the other side. _I, Person_ is about identity, personhood, ethical issues concerning artificial intelligence and robots. The card I used is an image of a girl and a robot playing together in a room. They both have swords and the robot wears a pirate eye patch. The girl says “I’ll fight you to the death!” I asked the kids to observe the image carefully and describe it in detail.

The other side of the card displays seven questions. I considered only four of them:

- **Could a robot be a better friend than a human?**
- **Is having a robot friend the same as having a wardrobe friend?**
- **What exactly is it to be a good friend?**
- **Could you ever love a robot?**
This is part of our dialogue:

- **Can robots be friends with children? Why?**

Girl 3: No, they can’t because they have no feelings. They don’t know if they are happy or sad, or if I’m angry.

Girl 1: Yes and no. No because of feelings. But they say in their minds: “What’s up with you?” They feel something when they see you sad. They can play and feel sorry if a friend falls down.

- **Could you ever love a robot?**

Girl 2: You can love a robot if you invented it, it came from your imagination. You wanted to build it.

The first and second activities were about fictional characters. The objective of the closing activity was to transfer their ideas to a real story about experiences during the pandemic. I showed part of a video about a robot called “Benebot.” In the video, two robots welcome children at a Mexican private school, measure their body temperature and provide hand sanitizer. The video partially modified their initial opinions and attitudes. Some of them were charmed by the robots. I asked them: “Would you like to have a robot in your school?” One girl said: “The robots are super cool. I wish they could be at our school when we come back but we can’t yet.” I also asked: “Would you like to have a robot teacher?” The boy said: “No, because it wouldn’t have feelings,” so he was consistent with his initial position. The group agreed that robots can be helpful. For them, being able to have feelings was important in order to distinguish humans from robots.

**An Evaluation of the Experience**

The experience surprised me because they were not shy, they participated during the whole video-session. They started to distinguish persons from robots proposing some criteria. They expressed their opinions about befriending a robot and implicitly their ideas about friendship. They gave some reasons to justify their claims. These were the central objectives I had in mind for the session. The issues we explored are not included in the official curriculum for second and third grades, or at least they are not approached in the way we did. In the elementary school official curriculum there is a course called “Civic Education and Ethics.” Official textbooks for this subject include topics such as children’s rights and human rights, civic duties, conflict resolution and decision making skills.” Although personal identity is somehow included in those official textbooks, it is considered mainly from the cultural and citizenship standpoints, e.g., every person deserves respect; every person is a member of a community with certain traits and traditions. Therefore, the issues we explored and the kind of open dialogue we had serve as a complement to the official course.

The kids asked their own questions about the card, but the questions were about concrete details of the illustration. We didn’t talk about what is it to be a friend, but they assumed a friend is someone with feelings and capable of empathy. I wish I had asked them more follow-up questions. Now I think I could have planned a second session on this topic so we could devote more time for their own questions and dialogue between them. There were more sessions in the workshop and we talked about different issues, such as boredom, mistakes and animal rights. In general, it was not easy to keep their attention because sometimes they got distracted with things, pets and noises in their homes.

Afterwards, I read the Spanish version of the picture book *Can I Build Another Me?* by Shinsuke Yoshitake. It’s the story of Kenta, an eight year old boy who is tired of homework and housework. Kenta buys a robot because
he wants it to replace him. He thinks the robot has to be an exact copy of himself, so nobody notices the change. The robot asks Kenta: “Then explain how is it to be Me.” Kenta provides general ID data—name, gender, address—and describes himself physically. But the robot argues it needs more details in order to become “another Me.” Kenta has to enumerate his likes and dislikes; his origins; the changes he has gone through; his secrets; his relationships and what makes him unique. . . . At the end, Kenta realizes it is not easy to be replaced by a robot. If I had known this book before, I would have read it with the kids and listen to what they have to say.

Endnotes


Patricia Díaz-Herrera got her MA in Philosophy at SUNY-University at Buffalo. Patricia is a Philosophy professor at Universidad Autónoma de la Ciudad de México (UACM). She teaches a P4C seminar for undergraduate students since 2016.
Can children between the ages of four and five engage in philosophical dialogue, listen carefully to each other, argue, change their minds, create new words, make clarifications and take other steps in thinking? This paper highlights a dialogue with twenty-two children in a local kindergarten in Heraklion, Greece who are familiar with P4C practices. The aim of this paper is to show an example from everyday school life of how teachers or P4C practitioners can minimize their interventions and listen carefully to the children and analyze their arguments and ways of thinking.

Inspired by Valentine’s Day, children were introduced to “Frog in Love,” a picture-book by Max Velthuijs. Children listened attentively to the text and illustrations. At the end of the storytelling, the children had some time to reflect on the book and come forward with comments and questions that the book triggered in them. The following table shows the children’s initial comments and reactions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children’s Questions and Reaction on Max Velthuijs’ Frog in Love</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Why didn’t Frog know that he is in love? (Chris, age 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Why Frog’s heart went thump-thump faster and he felt cold and hot? (George, age 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Why did he jump so high since he knew he would fall and hurt himself? (Panos, age 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Can a frog marry a duck? Is that possible? (Orestis, aged 5 and many other children)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Can a frog love a duck? (Marcie age 4, John age 5 and many other children)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Why did frog take the flowers and his drawing to the duck’s house? (Ntina, age 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Because he was in love (Stavros response to Ntina)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Why was the frog so shy? When people get married, they should not be shy. (Gregory, age 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Why did the frog get red? (Stavros, age 5). Yes . . . as if he is roasted (Gregory and John, age 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• If we cut the flowers and there are no more there will be no beauty! (Chris)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Why didn’t frog get white like the duck? (Panos)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Children’s Dialogue

Can a frog love a duck? The children voted for Marcy’s and John’s question highlighted in the table above. Orestis, however, suggested replacing “love” with “marry.” He argued that you can love anyone, but it is different if you are to marry someone. The children agreed on this clarification and changed the question. Some of the children argued that such a marriage was not possible, while other children said that it was.

As facilitator, I introduced the wise owl, a small wooden ornament that the children already knew. Everyone holding the owl is allowed to say something and the other children have to listen attentively. Then the person who has the owl passes it on to another child. The children divide into
teams, the “marriage team” (a frog can marry a duck) and the “non-marriage team” (the frog cannot marry to duck). To make it more visible, I demarcated the space that each team could occupy with a stick. The children were allowed to switch to another team as long as they justified why they changed their mind.

![Figure 1: Creating space for the marriage and non-marriage group](image)

The children have chosen their places. Below, I have grouped the dialogues that took place in each team, along with all the comments and interventions that the children made, regardless which team they joined at the time. It is also noted when children changed their minds and moved to another group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Marriage” Team</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gregory (aged 5): This marriage can happen. Sometimes people with blond hair marry people who have black hair. Also, Black people marry white ones! (Panos changed his opinion and moved to “marry group”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panos (aged 5): Yes. You can marry someone from a different country. This is possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria (aged 4): They can travel to different countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fotis (aged 4): The duck can wear the marriage uniform and marry the frog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve (aged 5): There is not a marriage uniform. It is a wedding dress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George (aged 4): The frog should marry the duck because he needs someone to cook for him and do the rest of the housework and be happy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asteris (aged 5): If the frog put on the duck’s dress he can be the duck.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facilitator:</strong> If we put on someone’s else dress do we become another person?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve: No! We made animal uniforms for the carnival but we didn’t become animals. (Panos changed his mind again and stepped back to “not marry group”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panos: What if frogs are used to marrying frogs? Then they wouldn’t get married to a duck. (Stavros changed his mind and moved to the “marry group”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stavros: But if they love each other?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthi (aged 5): If the duck loves the frog then she can marry him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fotis: The frog should marry to the duck because he doesn’t want to lose her. <strong>Facilitator:</strong> What do people need in order to be together?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George: Love and care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimos (aged 4): And kissing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the final round, the wooden owl passed from hand to hand and the children made a final comment on the initial question. The children who had not yet spoken were given one last chance to argue. Some of the children's answers were as follows:
Children’s Final Thoughts

Michael (age 5): Let them get married so there will have fewer problems.
George (age 4): If the duck asks the frog to take her back home then she will make a cup of tea for him. Then, they will go for a picnic and she will cook for him and then the frog will marry her and there will be someone to do the housework!
Francis (age 5): The frog might find a girl frog and not love the duck anymore so it is better not to marry her at all.
Orestis: They cannot be together. They also have different legs.
Steve: So what?
Asteris: They cannot be together because the duck cannot jump like a frog and the frog does not swim the way duck does.
Giorgina: A man duck and the duck can be better together and go for a stroll.
Agape: If the duck gets married to the frog there will be a problem with having many different babies.

Highlights and Analysis of the Dialogue

The following table summarizes the arguments the children used to support their opinions and the types of thinking that emerged (critical, creative, collaborative and caring).

“Marriage Team”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Argument</th>
<th>Basic Concepts</th>
<th>Type of Argument</th>
<th>Type of thinking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They can travel to different countries.</td>
<td>Things frog and duck can do in common / Mutuality</td>
<td>Example</td>
<td>Critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the frog puts on the duck dress he can be the duck.</td>
<td>Pretending and Becoming what we pretend</td>
<td>Hypothesis</td>
<td>Imaginative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The frog should marry the duck because he needs someone to cook for him and do the rest of the housework and be happy.</td>
<td>Marriage for practical issues and happiness</td>
<td>Practical / Pragmatic / Manipulative</td>
<td>Critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the duck loves the frog then she can marry him.</td>
<td>Love as condition to marriage</td>
<td>Cause and effect</td>
<td>Critical / Hypothesis / Caring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The frog should marry the duck because he doesn’t want to lose her.</td>
<td>Not losing someone</td>
<td>Cause and effect</td>
<td>Caring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes people with blond hair marry people who have black hair. Also, Black people marry white ones!</td>
<td>Arguing against different color as a reason for not getting married</td>
<td>Counter examples</td>
<td>Critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And if he couldn’t find a frog? Is it better to be alone?</td>
<td>Loneliness</td>
<td>Hypothesis</td>
<td>Critical / Caring</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**“Non-Marriage Team”**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Argument</th>
<th>Basic Concepts</th>
<th>Type of Argument</th>
<th>Type of thinking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The duck lives in a different family and so does the frog. They don’t belong to the same kind</td>
<td>Difference based on the kind</td>
<td>Making distinctions</td>
<td>Critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They don’t have the same color. The frog cannot marry the duck because he is green and the duck is white</td>
<td>Difference based on color</td>
<td>Making distinctions</td>
<td>Critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They don’t have the same shape. The duck has a beak the frog hasn’t/ They do not have the same blood/ Different legs</td>
<td>Difference based on characteristics/ shape</td>
<td>Making distinctions</td>
<td>Critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The duck wouldn’t understand frog’s language.</td>
<td>Difference based on the language that frogs and ducks use</td>
<td>Making distinctions</td>
<td>Critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What about the food? Frog must feel disgust for the duck’s food / They eat different things. How will they live together?</td>
<td>Difference based on the food</td>
<td>Making distinctions/ Hypothesis</td>
<td>Critical, Imaginative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They cannot be together because the duck cannot jump like a frog and the frog does not swim the way duck does.</td>
<td>Difference based on skills and abilities</td>
<td>Making distinctions/ Give an example</td>
<td>Critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is different for humans. They can get married if they have different color. This is not the same for animals.</td>
<td>Discriminating among humans and animals</td>
<td>Incomplete argument</td>
<td>Critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The frogs should love frogs and the ducks, ducks/ The frog should look for a girl frog</td>
<td></td>
<td>Categorical</td>
<td>Critical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What type of children are they going to give birth to?</td>
<td>Difference based on the progeny</td>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>Imaginative/ Critical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other Potential Philosophical Concepts That Emerged Through Children’s Dialogue

The children’s initial questions and comments, whether or not were not selected, could raise many potential philosophical concepts that could be discussed among the children at another time. Such concepts are the following:

- **Beauty**: Chris asked what would happen if we cut the flowers. She argues that there would then be no more beauty! This comment could be discussed further. Her thinking is imaginative and caring at the same time and she shows that she is able to offer a hypothesis even though she is only four years old.

- **Shyness and marriage**: Gregory (aged 5) thought that those who marry should not be shy with each other. He thinks categorically (he uses a “should”) but does not elaborate on his thought because there was not much time at this point of the discussion.

- **Causes, consequences and the intentionality of our actions**: Panos (aged 5) wondered why the frog jumped so high, knowing that he would fall. This question, if taken up, could lead to other examples of causes and effects from the children’s everyday life.

Other Philosophical Thinking Moves

Even though the majority of the children voted on whether a frog could love a duck, Orestis preferred his question, which happened to be the second most popular. He found that the children would discuss his question if he just changed one word. To achieve this, he had to convince the children of this change. He pragmatically made a distinction between “love” and “marry,” arguing that marrying someone brings more difficulties than just loving. He is only five years old, but the process of his thinking was very sophisticated. As a facilitator, I did not want to interfere and opt for the questions that the majority had initially opted for. I preferred to observe the children’s reactions and see if they would be persuaded.

Children, no matter how young they are, want to use the “right” words to express their ideas and be understood. Anthi corrects Fotis who refers to a “marriage uniform” as a wedding dress. Is Fotis suggesting that marriage is an act of pretense, with both parties wearing their “marriage uniforms” and withdrawing when necessary? Or is he using this invented expression because he does not know what a wedding dress is?

The children could imagine what kind of children the duck and the frog could give birth to. Some children said that there would be both frogs and ducks while others invented completely new words (Frogducks/ duckfrog babies).

Children often make up stories and scenarios to convince others that reveal their previous assumptions and presuppositions. George argues that “if the duck asks the frog to take her home then she will make him a cup of tea. Then, they will have a picnic and she will cook for him and then the frog will marry her and there will be someone to do the housework.” The child thinks imaginatively, hypothesizes, considers previous experiences that have arisen from his observations, and reveals presuppositions and assumptions that marriage is about having the woman do the housework.

Finally, there were many incomplete arguments that seemed more like assertions without further support. For example, when the children argued that a duck should belong to a duck and a frog to a frog, they did not further substantiate their opinion. Also, when Michalis argued that it is better for the Duck and Frog to be together because they would have fewer problems, he did not indicate what these problems would be and how they could be resolved.
Facilitator’s Interventions Or Non-Interventions

Below, I state the cases of the facilitator’s interventions:

• When Asteris mentioned that “if the frog puts on the duck’s suit, he becomes a duck” I questioned whether we become what we pretend to be. Steve illustrated this with a concrete example (“We made animal uniforms for the carnival but we didn’t become animals”).

• When children mentioned that a frog and a duck should get married if they love each other, I asked the children what people need to be together. This move gets the children thinking about the requirement for marriage and the needs that marriage fulfills.

• When some children insisted that Duck and Frog have different colors and therefore they cannot be together, I asked if the color is a reason not to marry someone.

• The children pointed out that Duck and Frog would not understand each other because they speak a different language. I asked if language could be a reason for frog and duck not getting together. The children answered either on the basis of their experiences (The boy whose mother was Italian and his father Greek explain that such marriage is possible) or by logical thinking (“the duck will teach the frog Papapa and vice versa”).

There were a few cases where the facilitator could have intervened more. For example, I could have paid more attention to Pano’s comment (“What if frogs are used to marry frogs? Then they wouldn’t marry a duck”) because he introduced the idea of habit as a reason for actions. I could have asked Panos to clarify what he meant by the habit of doing something. Also, in the case of incomplete arguments (especially those that start with a “should”) I could have urged the children to explain more precisely what they mean.

Conclusion—Follow Up Activities

Children at a young age seem to be able to sustain a discussion for a long time if it takes the form of a simple dilemma. “Can a frog marry a duck?” is a question that can be answered with a “yes” or “no” but at the same time it allows children to open their minds and justify their answers. The children were able to change their minds which made them listen carefully to others and be persuaded if there were valid arguments. Thinking and changing their minds allow the children to change their point of view and put themselves in the shoes of others.

Most of the time the children talked to each other and the role of the facilitator was as small as possible. The facilitator’s questions serve to clarify further but even if these questions were missing, the quality of the children’s dialogue would still be high. The children seemed to care about convincing the others and succeeded in putting themselves in Duck’s and Frog’s shoes and thinking about their dilemma as if it were something that concerned them. Therefore, the children thought both critically and imaginatively, and in some cases included their past experiences.

The discussion about the “Frog in love” could be an end in itself. However, due to the children’s interest, some follow-up activities took place, which are summarized below:

• What is love: The children listened to different songs and discussed the meaning of love. They also choose the kind of music they found more loveable than others
• The children wrote their own love stories and illustrated them.
• Love hearts: Each child was given a piece of paper. The children chose the size and color. They folded the paper and drew half the shape of a heart. Then they cut it out and as the paper unfolded, hearts appeared in different shapes and colors. The teacher wrote on each child’s heart their ideas of what love is. These answers gave birth to a new philosophical inquiry regarding love and it’s ways to express it.

Sofia Nikolidaki holds a Ph.D. in philosophy and education (philosophy with children) from the University of South Wales, UK. She works for the University of Crete at the department of Preschool Education. She has been a preschool teacher in Greek kindergartens for fifteen years. She has been practicing P4C for many years and has incorporated P4C-methodology at students’ teaching practice in kindergartens. She lives in Chania (Greece). She is married and has an adorable twenty-one month girl.
BELIEVER: I told my parents you are a non-believer.
NON-BELIEVER: And?
BELIEVER: They said we can no longer be friends.
NON-BELIEVER: Because I don’t believe what you believe?
BELIEVER: Yes . . . and that you continue to refuse to believe what we believe.
NON-BELIEVER: So, I am not entitled to my own beliefs or opinions?
BELIEVER: You are, but I’m not allowed to tolerate non-believers, they say it’s against our faith.
NON-BELIEVER: Why exactly is it against your faith?
BELIEVER: Because it’s just wrong!
NON-BELIEVER: You still haven’t told me why?
BELIEVER: Let’s not talk about it anymore.
NON-BELIEVER: But I want to talk about it!
BELIEVER: My parents told me that I’m not allowed to talk to non-believers, and that all I can do is pray from them.
NON-BELIEVER: I don’t need your prayers.
BELIEVER: You do or you’ll be in trouble in this life and the next . . .
NON-BELIEVER: You don’t know that.
BELIEVER: But I do.
NON-BELIEVER: How?
BELIEVER: Because my parents say we do; because we believe—
NON-BELIEVER: —And I believe that if you keep listening to your parents, you’ll end up nowhere and with no friends.
BELIEVER: Let’s not talk about it anymore; I must say goodbye now.
NON-BELIEVER: Do you really want to do this?
BELIEVER: (silent)
NON-BELIEVER: Is being my friend causing you any real harm or injury?
BELIEVER: No!

NON-BELIEVER: Do I make you do bad things, like say hurtful things to people who are different from you, or suggest that you do something bad to them because they are different from you?
BELIEVER: No, of course you don’t!
NON-BELIEVER: Then, put your beliefs aside, and tell me if you honestly think I am a bad person who you should not befriend.
BELIEVER: I know you are not a bad person. You are one of the best people I know . . . you just . . . don’t believe.
NON-BELIEVER: And that’s enough to turn us into enemies?
BELIEVER: Honestly, I don’t want us to be enemies because I really like you.
NON-BELIEVER: Then, let’s stay friends.
BELIEVER: I can’t because my parents say you are in the wrong for not believing like us.
NON-BELIEVER: So, you think I am unworthy of your friendship, because your parents and your faith tell you to do so?
BELIEVER: Well, yes . . .
NON-BELIEVER: But you admit you like me and think I am a good person?
BELIEVER: Yes.
NON-BELIEVER: So, if I were not a good person but believed in your faith, could we still be friends?
BELIEVER: Well, no . . . I mean, yes . . . I don’t know; you’re confusing me, let’s not talk about it anymore.
NON-BELIEVER: You’re right, we shouldn’t talk about it anymore, but you should still think about it.
BELIEVER: My parents said—
NON-BELIEVER: —I know what your parents said, but I want to know what you think you understand of your faith.
BELIEVER: What I think I understand?
NON-BELIEVER: Yes. What is your answer to my question about what your faith says about being friends with a bad person who believes?
BELIEVER: I don’t think it says anything about that . . .
NON-BELIEVER: But according to your parents, it does say something about becoming enemies with a good person who doesn’t believe and who you really like.
BELIEVER: Oh, benevolent Sky who encompasses the holy land, I ask you to watch over the soul of my friend. Forgive my friend for not believing in you . . .
NON-BELIEVER: I don’t need your prayers; I need you to think!
BELIEVER: And I need you to pray!
NON-BELIEVER: You’re right; let’s not talk about it anymore.
BELIEVER: Let my friend know that your way is the only way . . .
NON-BELIEVER: I thought we said we wouldn’t talk about it.
BELIEVER: I wasn’t talking to you; I was talking to my Sky.
NON-BELIEVER: Must you talk so loudly?
BELIEVER: I wanted to be sure She heard me, so She can save you.
NON-BELIEVER: Don’t worry about me, nothing will happen to me because I don’t believe in your Sky.
BELIEVER: Oh, benevolent Sky, my friend didn’t mean it!
NON-BELIEVER: STOP!

BELIEVER: I’M SORRY! I’m sorry, I just care for you and don’t want anything bad to happen to you.
NON-BELIEVER: You’re the bad thing happening to me.
BELIEVER: What?!
NON-BELIEVER: How can not being friends with you be a good thing? I really like you, too. Now we can no longer be friends because of your parents, your Sky . . .
BELIEVER: Then believe in my Sky; She is the only way.
NON-BELIEVER: No, She’s not. There are other ways; and I refuse to believe in something that would make a good person like me be perceived as an enemy, while a bad person who believes could potentially be your friend.
BELIEVER: Let’s not talk about it anymore.
NON-BELIEVER: We won’t ever have to talk about it since we can no longer be friends. I guess it’s time for us to say goodbye.
BELIEVER: I guess so . . .
NON-BELIEVER: Well, goodbye.
BELIEVER: WAIT! . . . It doesn’t feel right.
NON-BELIEVER: Because it isn’t right.
BELIEVER: Maybe we could still be friends without my parents knowing?
NON-BELIEVER: That works for me, but on one condition . . .
BELIEVER: What?
NON-BELIEVER: Let’s not talk about this ever again.

Candace Amarante is an artist-researcher specializing in writing children’s stories and plays. In most of her stories, she pursues two main goals: bringing awareness of children’s rights through the arts and incorporating, in children’s literature, the voice of children with chronic illnesses. Her most recent work includes The Sky Smiles at Me (featured in the Goodnight Bag-LEARN Quebec 2021), The Dream Machine (in collaboration with Dr. Argerie Tsimicalis and Shriners Hospitals for Children-Canada; Tellwell Publishers, forthcoming), The Blunder Family: Now where’d I put the pork? (East of the Web 2020), and The Pheasant’s Tale or . . . was it its Tail? (Green Bamboo Publishing 2017). She has also written a play on children’s rights, The Ugly Ones (with Chelsea Woolley; Staged Reading Geordie Theatre Fest 2020), and a play for young audiences, You, Me and Victor Hugo! on the concept of censorship (Artist Mentorship Program at the Black Theatre Workshop 2018–2019). Candace holds a doctorate in political science from Columbia University in the City of New York. She has lived in Tokyo, Freetown, Nairobi, Salerno, Turin, and several places in the United States. Currently, she resides in Montreal, where she is a member of the Board of Directors of the Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children.
Intentional Disruption: Expanding Access to Philosophy, edited by Stephen Kekoa Miller (Vernon Press, 2021), showcases a number of unique and successful philosophy programs in schools and communities. In each of the essays, authors share their personal experiences and insights in creating and sustaining a range of innovative philosophy programs. Through their discussions the authors demonstrate how and why they believe doing philosophy should be more easily accessible to all, and as well how they think about philosophy and philosophical practice. Anyone interested in philosophy programs that aim to include participants outside a college classroom—whether they are just beginning to consider the possibility of starting a program or have their own experiences and practices in an existing program—will find much in this volume to appreciate.

The volume’s editor, Stephen Kekoa Miller, contributed the opening chapter, “What to Consider when Considering a Pre-college Philosophy Program: Frequently Asked Questions from Those considering Starting a Pre-College Program or Improving an Existing One.” Miller notes that, while philosophy itself may be the subject of philosophical debate, “having a clear sense of what goals one has can help a lot to figure out what the program should look like” (2). Miller offers his thoughts on typical questions from those considering taking on the work of starting a pre-college philosophy program, such as whether young people are ready for philosophical thinking, and how to think about ethics education in schools. Miller’s rich discussion includes details regarding aims, methods and results of pre-college philosophy programs, and will prompt reflection (and, likely, more good questions!) for philosophers of all levels of experience with pre-college philosophy.

Daniel Coburn, Cassie Finley and Joe Glover’s contribution to this volume is “The Iowa Lyceum: Graduate Students and Pre-College Philosophy.” The Iowa Lyceum, a pre-college philosophy summer camp, is organized and run by University of Iowa Philosophy graduate students. This program, the authors tell us, not only provides opportunities for the campers to grow their philosophical thinking, but also provides wonderful opportunities for the graduate student counselors to reflect on and develop their philosophical pedagogy. In addition to thinking a philosophical education is useful to pre-college students, Coburn, Finley and Glover also discuss “philosophy as a transformative endeavor” (27), explaining that they “aim to provide an experience through which participants begin to develop the skills and dispositions necessary for stepping back, identifying, and carefully evaluating the stream of information and problems with which they will have to engage throughout the rest of their lives” (27–8). Campers and counsellors alike can benefit from this experience.

In his essay “P4C and Community Engaged Pedagogy,” Erik Kenyon describes the process with which he began his work in philosophy for children as a case study in backwards course design. When tasked with designing community engaged general education courses at Rollins College, Kenyon started by thinking about ways to encourage his students to ask questions rather than be focused on answers, and to encourage them to be more civically engaged. Kenyon decided that a
course that included philosophy for children—envisioned as his college students engaging in philosophical discussions with students in a local grade school through reading picture books—fit the bill. However, plans with the school had to be changed, and the college students instead worked with pre-schoolers. This led to thinking and learning about how to do philosophy with very young children and adapting practices accordingly, while still keeping the initial aims of the courses in mind. Throughout his essay, Kenyon shares what he hoped his students would remember from his class, as well as some of his own unexpected takeaways.

In “Philosophy In and By the Community,” Marisa Diaz-Waian gives readers the “flavor” of Merlin, an intergenerational community philosophy program she founded and runs. Diaz-Waian compares philosophy to gardening, writing that she thinks of philosophy “as a ‘hands in the dirt’ activity rooted in the joys, sorrows, and challenges of everyday life” (50). She shares that her work with Merlin is also a deeply personal endeavor, as through philosophy she both grieves the loss of her father and honors his life. Diaz-Waian shares two examples of Merlin’s programs, Big Ideas by Little Philosophers and Philosophy Walks; the first partners with local learning centers to add pre-college philosophy to their programs, the second invites community members to engage with philosophical reflection and discussion while also walking in community with one another. Throughout her discussion, Diaz-Waian explains how she understands what it means to do philosophy in the community, and how this in turn informs Merlin’s programming.

Christian Kronsted and Jonathan Wurtz discuss how anti-racism informs the design of Philosophical Horizons and its practices in “Philosophical Horizons: P4/WC and Anti-Racism in Memphis, TN.” The authors note that Memphis is a majority-minority city, and discuss why norms in education and traditional P4C practices may “sometimes be harmful or alienating” (92) to the students they serve in Memphis. Philosophical Horizons thus
aims to institute practices that aim to mitigate against racial power dynamics. As part of their discussion, Kronsted and Wurtz relate an anecdote that involves conducting philosophy sessions in a rock climbing gym; these sessions were quite different from those that might occur in a typical school class, including because students could drop in and participate (or not) as they liked. The authors observed that being outside a traditional classroom—often a site of rules and discipline—led to freer, more open philosophy discussions with their students. In this chapter, the authors also discuss the challenges their program has faced in maintaining adequate funding; as evidenced by discussion in other essays in the volume, this is a common problem for pre-college philosophy programs.

In “Overcoming Barriers: Pre-college Philosophy Programs in Neoliberalism,” Sarah Vitale argues that philosophy for children is a radical project, as it challenges traditional K–12 structures, provides space for critical engagement, and is “radically democratic insofar as it holds that young people are capable of accessing the truth and exercising reason just as adults can” (120). Vitale discusses her work in creating and running the Philosophy Outreach Project, a program that connects Indiana high school students and Ball State University students through philosophical dialogue. Vitale details ways in which neoliberal understandings of “value” in education undermine philosophical education in multiple ways. Yet, even while she makes the case that too often it is difficult to obtain adequate funding, time or recognition to properly support create and sustain a philosophy for children’s programs, Vitale notes it is nevertheless possible—and, worthwhile—to do this work in spite of such challenges.

Like many of the programs discussed in this volume, the Penn Project for Philosophy for the Young (P4Y) focuses on the local community for the design and practice of their pre-college philosophy initiatives. Dustin Webster, Stephen Esser and Karen Detlefsen detail P4Y’s work, along with some lessons learned, in “Bringing Philosophy into Philadelphia Classrooms.” The first P4Y initiative was a Philosophy Club in partnership with Philadelphia Futures, a college-readiness organization; from there, a community-engaged/service-learning course for undergraduates at Penn was added, in which students were trained to teach philosophy to high school students, which they also did as a part of that course. The program and its initiatives have only grown from there, and now also include hosting a regional competition for the National High School Ethics Bowl and plans for a research project. The authors also share some of the lessons they have learned: they write that teachers are key partners for the efficacy, consistency and sustainability of programs; as well, developing curricula is important, especially as programs staffed by students will have new staff on a regular basis.

Joseph Aloysius Murphy shares how he put his background in philosophy to good use in “Once A Philosopher-In-Hiding: Teaching Philosophy in Spanish in the USA.” Murphy tells the story of how he worked to grow his independent school’s ethics and philosophy options, including creating a small Ethics and Philosophy Department, and offering a history of philosophy class taught entirely in Spanish—a class that not only benefits students in teaching philosophical skills, but also pushes students’ Spanish skills as they work to think about philosophical concepts and ideas in Spanish. Murphy encourages interested teachers with philosophy in their backgrounds to look for ways to grow philosophy opportunities in their own school offerings, and to look for colleagues with training in philosophy (but who teach other subjects) that may be interested in taking up this work. Murphy’s story exemplifies how a “phi-
Philosopher-in-hiding’s” creativity combined with existing teaching goals can support creating new opportunities in philosophical learning in schools.

In this volume, the reader will find many practical insights as well as philosophical ideas about doing philosophy in schools and communities. Each individual essay demonstrates a different way to realize doing philosophy as a disruptive, active practice. Authors explain how and why they designed and run their program as they do, and what lessons they have learned so far from their work on their programs. And even as each of the essays discusses a unique program, there are certain common themes in the collection, including: thinking about how communities can shape philosophy programs and practices; how to find opportunities within existing structures to make philosophy programs work, and how to engage in the work of creating and sustaining creative philosophy programs despite many on-going challenges to the work. All of these essays highlight the value of philosophical practice—even as it can take many forms—for everyone.

Janice Moskalik, PhD, is an Associate Teaching Professor at Seattle University.

For lesson plans on using picture books to engage in philosophy, visit this website: HTTPS://WWW.PRINDLEINSTITUTE.ORG/TEACHING-CHILDREN-PHILOSOPHY/

Thomas E. Wartenberg shared his extensive collection of materials with the Prindle Institute and it can be found here.
I had been eagerly awaiting the edited volume on the work of Gareth Matthews since I first heard that it was underway. As someone who has been highly influenced by Matthews but is still far from an expert on his whole oeuvre, I really looked forward to both a full-career context and access to some of his more obscure works. This book delivers and then some!

For someone like me who never got to meet Gary Matthews but knows many people who worked with him, one of the most moving parts of this book is the stories, from the opening one by Stanley Cavell to the afterword by Jana Mohr Lone. Everyone who writes in this book who knew him makes a point of sharing these stories. Not only do they make us like him a lot, but they also help us to see his work with children and philosophy in a different light. We learn a great deal from accounts of how he interacted with kids, his own students and colleagues, from how he crafted questions and how he brought out astounding insights from young thinkers. For those of us who work with younger students, it certainly makes us take a breath and wonder if we could ever be so natural and engaging as these stories make him out to be.

First, let’s look at the structure of the text. Gregory and Laverty have divided the book thematically into five parts: philosophy and children’s literature, children’s philosophical thinking, the Socratic teacher, philosophy of developmental psychology and the philosophy of childhood. Each part consists of an essay which gives an overview of that particular aspect of Matthews’ work while also generally offering critical insights into where that field has gone since Matthews’ death in 2011.

These essays are uniformly fair-minded and effective at situating Matthews’ work with other thinkers in that particular area. Their critiques, too, seemingly suggest how excited Matthews would be to see some of the new work being done in these fields, some of which he could be credited with creating. Karen Muris’ essay focuses on children’s literature, describing Matthews’ appealing focus on philosophical whimsy, but also showing how potentially politically problematic some children’s literature is when suggesting how “natural” children must act (52). Stephanie Burdick-Shepherd and Cristina Cammarano’s discussion of the child as philosopher in Matthews is particularly delightful; here, they show how Matthews emphasized the role of children as colleagues who could forward the aims of philosophy itself. In citing Matthews’ wonderful call to “cultivate the incipient grandparent in each of us” (98), they ask us to extend this idea and to think about issues of positionality that may prevent true engagement with philosophy and also to extending the chances to do intergenerational philosophy . . . even with ourselves at different times in our lives! Peter Shea takes on the often equivocated concept of Socratic teaching. Here, we get to see Matthews engage with Plato and Aristotle in earnest. Shea ends up making us ask the question Matthews didn’t answer fully, “Should philosophy be done differently at different ages?” (139). Jennifer Glaser takes on the question of developmental psychology, in particular Matthews’ critiques of Piaget and Kohlberg. She ends up suggesting that Matthews leaves the concept of Moral Imagination underdeveloped (180). Finally, Walter Omar Kohan and Claire Cassidy explore the field Matthews kind of invented, the philosop-
Another important aspect of this book as a whole is to give readers a sense of the outsize role Matthews plays in the movement to bring philosophy to children. In particular, it helps us to see both the similarities and differences with some of his contemporaries, especially Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp. Laverty and Gregory give a very helpful introduction to the book that lays out the similarities and differences clearly. In doing so, it certainly inspired me to look again at their earlier, similarly arranged volume on Ann Margaret Sharp.

There will always be room to question what’s in and what’s not in a book on someone who had such a long career that spanned so many seemingly different areas. I, for one, was hoping to learn more about Matthews’ work on Augustine, especially since he had so much to say about children. While there are two pages in the Burdick-Shepherd and Cammarano essay on Augustine’s The Teacher, there isn’t much else on this. Matthews’ work on ancient philosophy, particularly his work showing how much of interest we can find there about children and childhood is here mostly confined to what he found in Plato and Aristotle. Of course, Matthews wrote about philosophy of language, philosophy of religion, philosophy of mind, philosophy of life and death, metaphysics in addition to ancient and medieval philosophy. It would be unreasonable to see material on all of this, but those areas that intersected with his work on children and childhood would have been nice. This critique simply shows how delightful the rest of the book is, however; I wanted more when I got to the end.

This book is very highly recommended. I think it’d be a great introduction to Matthews’ work, but it will also be frequently referred to by people already in the field. I found much new material in this book, but I also enjoyed re-reading some of my favorite articles. Matthews’ calls for us to start taking the contributions of young philosophers seriously and as a result to make a point of spending time with them doing philosophy still rings true, but sadly is still largely unheeded. We still need much work to further his first steps towards a robust philosophy of childhood. Our school systems, social structures and parenting manuals still assume a deficit model of children’s cognition. We still treat children’s ideas condescendingly. All of this shows why Gareth Matthews is still as timely as ever, as needed as ever. Make sure to read this book, even if you already know Matthews’ work. I know I’m thankful for this volume for the chance it gave me to reconnect with this material. It inspired me and gave me impetus to work even harder to carry out the mission of helping to create spaces for children to do philosophy, and to be heard when they do.

Stephen Kekoa Miller has taught Philosophy and Religious Studies at Oakwood Friends School and Marist College in Poughkeepsie, New York for 19 years.
The Philosophy Learning and Teaching Organization is a national organization that advocates and supports introducing philosophy to pre-college students. PLATO provides education for teachers about ways to introduce philosophy in pre-college classrooms, supports faculty and graduate students working in the field of pre-college philosophy, and advocates in both the philosophical and educational communities for more pre-college philosophy instruction. More information is available at the organization’s website https://plato-philosophy.org.

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From page 12: PIJA LINDENBAUM: Boodil My Dog

From page 14: TOVE JANSSON: Comet in Moominland, Tales from Moomin Valley and Moominpapa at Sea

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