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P4C and “self-education”: How can philosophical dialogue best solicit selves?

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“I could be friends with a robot.”

Aiden, The Thinking Playground -CAMP, 2014

Educating selves

“Everyone in this room is a robot except for one, and you know who that is!”

Such an exhortation at the beginning of a P4C camp session¹ dedicated to exploring the “other minds problem” turned out to be a slick way to excite youngsters’ interest, as it immediately laid bare the problem with “other minds,” namely that they are invisible. The ensuing dialogue, which focused on the difference between being a friend with another human and being a friend with a robot exposed the problem as having more

¹ *The Thinking Playground* <http://thinkingplayground.org/> is a summer P4C camp for children ages 7 – 12, jointly sponsored by The Vancouver Institute of Philosophy for Children www.VIP4C.ca and The University of the Fraser Valley.

layers of complexity. That is, participants quickly decided that the important question was not whether or not a robot had a “mind,” but whether or not a robot had a “mind of its own”; whether a robot could make its “own” decisions; whether a robot could be said to have a “self” with which to be friends. In comparing robots to animals, many in the group came to the conclusion that though animals clearly have minds in the sense that they can see and hear and solve problems, etc., since animals like frogs, squirrels, and rats are completely determined by their instincts, they could not be said to have “minds of their own,” i.e., they could not be said to have “a self,” in the self-determining sense. They thus concluded that both minds and selves are invisible, but that the latter, i.e., whether robots have “selves” ought to be the focus when trying to decide if one could really be friends with a robot because surely you couldn’t be a friend with a robot unless the robot could decide for *itself* whether *it* wanted to be friends with you.

This intriguing fact, i.e., that we cannot see another’s mind or self, finds its way into a number of Hollywood productions. The plot of *Stepford Wives*, produced in 2004, revolves around the indistinguishability of “selfless” (not so nice) robots and “selfed” humans, while *Her*, produced in 2013, presents an intriguing case of the possibility of falling in love with a “selfless” operating system.

Though central to metaphysics, and exciting for entertainment, this fact, that selves are invisible, has received insufficient attention in the field of P4C, and virtually none in the field of education in general. This may not be surprising as the enthusiasm to enrich “minds” both with essential

information as well as with critical, creative, and cooperative inquiry skills, may blind educators to the fact that their initiatives (even those that are dialogical) may not touch how children view themselves, nor how they ought to function in the world as they find it. This tendency to over-focus on empowering intellectual competence, in turn, can be reinforced by the need to utilize evaluative tools that are designed to measure easily accessed intellectual skills, e.g., The New Jersey Test for Critical Thinking.

This is not to say that the importance of “educating selves” (as opposed to enriching minds) has not been argued. John Dewey, for instance, in his book *Democracy and Education*, argues that, rather than focusing on information transfer or even skill enhancement, it is absolutely critical that schooling systems recognize that, whether they like it or not, they are in the business of self-creation (cf. Dewey 2007b). Charles Taylor makes a similar call in his books *Sources of the Self: The Making of The Modern Identity* (Taylor 1989), as well as in *Multiculturalism: The Politics of Recognition* (Taylor 1984), with the latter focusing on overhauling the modern university curriculum so as to make it more representative. And David Kennedy, in his book *The Well of Being: Childhood, Subjectivity, and Education* (Kennedy 2006), argues for the importance of schools creating an environment that nurtures the transformation of the self from one that is rigid, and presumably highly defended, to one that is quite literally a “self-in-progress”—what he refers to as an “intersubject,” with “no developmental terminus beyond a continuously receding horizon of ultimate integration” (ibid., p. 24). I, myself, have made a similar plea in a paper entitled “Taking Selves Seriously” (Gardner 2011a).

Since few in the field of P4C would disagree with the importance of educating selves, its lack of focus in general practice may be due to the “robot problem” referred to above. That is, many in the field may simply assume that when bodies show up, selves do as well, particularly when the educational strategy is dialogical. It is this assumption that is problematic, and it is this assumption that will be the focus here. Specifically, it will be suggested that we ought to assume the reverse; that for all kinds of reasons (discussed below), selves may not show up in dialogue (witness the absent “self” of a robot therapist²) unless specific strategies are undertaken to invite selves to the table.

It will be argued here that this notion that “selves may or may not be present,” if kept at the forefront, will alert educators to the need for undertaking strategies to ensure:

- (i) That educators summon selves to the table (through “through-and-through,” “trapeze” and genuinely relevant questions);
- (ii) That educators ensure that selves feel “seen” (through questioning for clarity and depth and responding for connection)

² <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2015/sep/17/ellie-machine-that-can-detect-depression>; <https://thebolditalic.com/the-rise-of-the-robot-therapist-459b20f770a9>; <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/media-spotlight/201411/the-rise-the-robot-therapist>; <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2015/06/robo-therapy>; <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6532335/>

and, hence, stick around; and

- (iii) That educators themselves show up as who they really are, rather than as technicians, or even as the lead inquirers, which carries the unusual implication that every facilitator will be utterly different from any other.

Of course, the central question is: Why should educators care if selves do or do not show up? The answer is that *if selves do not show up, selves cannot be educated*. So, if ethical development, or democratic citizenship, or authenticity, or whatever, is on the educative menu, a critical ingredient must be the inclusion of strategies that ensure that all parties are truly present, in body, mind and self. And this is true even for potentially ethically formidable education practices such as Philosophy for/with Children (P4wC) with its pedagogical anchor, the Community of Philosophical Inquiry (CPI). Facilitators must keep in mind that even though a CPI is thoroughly dialogical, and even though there may be a lot of “talking” going on, selves can still be absent unless particular care is taken to solicit their presence. On the other hand, since dialogue, though not sufficient, is nonetheless necessary to ensure the presence of selves, and since dialogue is inherent to the practice of P4wC, it will be suggested that those in the P4wC community ought to feel compelled to embrace the burden of soliciting selves precisely because they are in a unique position to do so.

To be is to be perceived: to be perceived is to be engaged

It is crucial that we begin our analysis with an all-too-brief account of George Herbert Mead's depiction of the development of the self. Mead (1934) argues that the self develops as a result of interpersonal dialogue. It is important to note that Mead is not arguing just that one's self-evaluation is influenced by the judgment of others; he is, rather, arguing quite literally that self-consciousness *as such* develops because of, and only because of, social interaction. Without interaction, in other words, there is no self-consciousness—a theory that is empirically supported by experiment carried out by Gallup (1977) that showed that the self-consciousness evident in chimps, as measured by mirror-related activities, is absent in chimps raised in isolation. According to Mead, then, self-consciousness, rather than being some mysterious metaphysical exudate of the brain, is rather an awareness (or a seeing) of one's behaviour through the fact that it is perceived and valued either positively or negatively by others, i.e., through the fact that one is *engaged* with the other. This is the principle that will underscore most of what follows.

On the basis of this anchor, let us move to the strategies needed for educating selves, i.e., (i) that children's selves, not merely their bodies and minds, need to be summoned; that (ii) children need to feel seen by others; and (iii) educators must themselves be engaged.

Children need to be summoned

Since the self is such that it becomes present as a function of being

perceived, in order for participants in a CPI to bring themselves to the table, they need to see their selves (not merely their bodies and minds) as being summoned. This summons is very much a function of the question that grounds the CPI. In particular, it is critical that (a) the question must be a “real” question (one that will be referred to as a “through-and-through question”); (b) the question must be contentious (one that will be referred to as a “trapeze question”); and (c) the question must be one about which participants genuinely care (rather than being some academic exercise).

a) A through-and-through question

Much has been written about the critical importance of the question around which a CPI gathers. P4C founder Lipman insisted (1988, pp.156-157) that the question be picked by participants, thus ensuring the possibility of genuine interest. Such a practice, however, can be problematic. As Jana Mohr Lone points out in her lovely book *The Philosophical Child* (Mohr Lone 2012), asking good questions takes practice; indeed, one could very well argue, as Mohr Lone does (cf. *ibid.*, p. 29), that one of the primary goals of P4C is precisely to educate participants to ask themselves good questions. If such is the case, then clearly asking participants to supply the inquiry questions at the outset seems like putting the cart before the horse. Much dispute remains with regard to this issue, something Wendy Turgeon, in her article “The Art and Danger of the Question: The History of the Question and Its Place Within the Practice of Philosophy for Children” (Turgeon 2015), does an impressive job of portraying. However, whatever one’s view about supplying or soliciting questions, there is one

thread that binds most P4wC practitioners, and that is that the question must be a genuine or “real” question for BOTH the participants AND for the facilitator; one that will be referred to here as a “through-and through question.” This is so because, in the normal course of events, students are pummeled with “fake” or one-way questions, i.e., questions which are just traps to see whether the victim’s answer can match up to that of the poser, e.g., “What is the capital of France?” In such situations, it is hardly surprising that students attempt to protect themselves from ridicule by limiting self-exposure. They will keep who they really are hidden from view.

In order to ensure that mere lip-service is not paid to the importance of a through-and-through question, i.e., in order to avoid the seduction of invisible indoctrination, I would argue that it is imperative that the facilitator eschew any topic, whether brought to the table by a participant or by the facilitator, about which the facilitator has a settled view. In this regard, facilitators (indeed all so-called question-askers) must be alert to the temptation of fielding moralizing questions, e.g., “Is bullying alright?” or “Is it OK to cheat on an exam?”; these tend to be particularly appetising as they seem like nice little traps for ensnaring victims, i.e., ways to insert values. Their obviousness, though, ought to sound the alarm. Most victims will eventually figure out that these are not real questions about which they are being asked to inquire. Most will surmise that they are being asked, rather, to serve as receptacles for the views of others. The result of not being summoned as autonomous thinkers will be that most will put themselves, as it were, on hold, and just try to play the game according to the perceived expectations of the poser.

Aside from the obvious non-through-and-through questions, there are other non-through-and-through questions that are not so transparent, and hence, for that reason, (at least it seems to me) even more dangerous. These are questions that focus on topics about which particular facilitators have fixed views. Since the fixity of these positions is idiosyncratic, that invitations to inquire are “fake” may not be immediately obvious. Indeed, it may take some time and a variety of subtle and/or not-so-subtle moves on the part of the facilitator before it becomes evident to participants that they are being herded toward the “correct” position. At this juncture, a sense of genuine betrayal is warranted; what looked like a summoning of selves was, in truth, a surreptitious maneuvering to summon canvases onto which scripts could be painted. None of this is to say, of course, that none of us ought to have strong, or even fixed beliefs. This is to say, rather, that if the facilitator aspires to be a co-inquirer (see section below: “Educators need to show up”), s/he ought to avoid facilitating inquiry with regard to the topics about which s/he has a settled opinion. Thus, for instance, hard core animal rights vegans ought to avoid attempting to facilitate an inquiry into the question of whether or not it is OK to eat meat or put animals in zoos, just as a died-in-the wool conservative ought to avoid the questions as to which political party ought to be elected. While these are important issues, and may indeed deserve defence, they are not suitable inquiry topics for facilitators with cemented positions, as such cement will almost inevitably stonewall genuine inquiry

and hence preclude the possibility of genuine self-involvement.³

b) A “trapeze” question

One way that Gadamer characterizes an “experience-enhancing question” is that it is one that can clearly elicit reasonable support for *both* sides of an issue (cf. Gadamer 2004). Specifically, he says “the significance of questioning consists in revealing the questionability of what is questioned. It has to be brought into a state of indeterminacy, so that there is an equilibrium between pro and contra” (ibid., p. 357). “Knowledge always means, precisely, considering opposites” (ibid., p. 359).

For children in P4wC camps mentioned above, these are described as “trapeze questions,” i.e., for a question to be fruitful, you need to imagine swinging from one side of the issue to the other; you need to be able to imagine, for example, that you might say “yes” to the question of whether or not it is important to have winners and losers in a competition, but that, on the other hand, you might say “no.” They are reminded

³ Aside from avoiding the topic altogether, another way of handling such a situation is for the facilitator to declare his/her allegiance at the outset, so that participants know that what is to follow is not a genuine inquiry *for the facilitator*. Thus, for instance, a group that this author was facilitating picked the question of “whether it was OK to hit a child.” The author shared with the group her “cemented” view that hitting a child was always wrong but agreed to facilitate the discussion if that was the wish of the group—which it was. Though an interesting discussion ensued, since the facilitator, at no time, could seriously and sincerely consider the merits of the opposition, the dynamic of the dialogue was such that it could not clearly be called a “community of philosophical inquiry.”

that, from a phenomenological point of view, that is what thinking “feels like.”

Peter Worley, founder of *The Philosophy Foundation* in the UK, has stirred up lively discussions amongst P4wC practitioners by advocating a somewhat similar strategy (Worley 2015), though he uses the more controversial term of a “closed” question, by which he means one that is “grammatically closed,” i.e., one to which one could initially answer either “yes” or “no.” This is controversial as, intuitively, one supposes that “open questions” such as “What is required of friendship?” or “What does it mean to have inner beauty?” seem more amenable to philosophical musings. But that is precisely the problem; wide-ranging musings that go this way or that, or any old way, can result in an amorphous discussion that can easily be carried out without bringing oneself to the table. Closed questions, on the other hand, like the infamous trolley car dilemmas (cf. Thomson 1985) (e.g., would you push a person onto the track if such an action would stop a runaway trolley that was about to dismember five others?), require one to make a decision. Since you must answer yes or no, you have to, in essence, commit *yourself*, if only in your imagination, to either shoving another to his death, or helplessly watching five people die, when an action of yours could have prevented it. In his book *Moral Tribes* (Greene 2013), Joshua Greene outlines in detail the various MRI’s done on people presented with similar scenarios that clearly show a self in conflict with itself, i.e., you can see yourself implicated in the answer that you give. If you have had to say yes or no, you have had to take a stand. Thus, inevitably, you become present to yourself in any ensuing discussion.

c) A question about which participants care

According to Peirce, genuinely reflecting on the merits of opposing viewpoints requires that one begin with a genuine sense of doubt about one's own position (cf. Peirce 1955). Specifically, he says that it is only the irritation of doubt that causes the struggle to attain a state of belief—a struggle that he calls “inquiry” (ibid., p. 10). And elsewhere, he reiterates that the action of thought is only excited by the irritation of doubt, which ceases when belief is attained (ibid., p. 26). John Dewey makes a similar point in his book *How We Think* when he says that a necessary precondition of reflective thought is a state of perplexity, hesitation, or doubt (Dewey 2007a, p. 9); that thinking only begins in what may fairly be called a forked-road situation. This is so because “as long as our activity glides smoothly along from one thing to another, ... there is no call for reflection. Difficulty or obstruction in the way of reaching a belief brings us, however, to pause” (ibid.). And Dewey goes on to say, “General appeals to a child (or to a grown-up) to think irrespective of the existence in his own experience of some difficulty that troubles him and disturbs his equilibrium, are as futile as advice to lift himself by his boot-straps” (ibid., p. 10).

All of the above suggest, that unless participants are already “on the road” for which the question creates a fork, or unless the possibility of a swing to the other side seems genuinely troubling, there will be no self-investment. This, in turn, suggests that though abstract questions such as “whether numbers really exist,” “whether a child’s squiggle could be

counted as art,” or “whether the ship of Theseus is the same ship at the end of the journey,” may well be terrific exercises in swinging thinking around (philosophy is fun, after all!), selves will remain untouched.

If we are to view P4wC as something more than cognitive upgrading, if we are to embrace its capacity to educate selves, then the topics on which inquiry focuses must be issues about which participants genuinely care.

Such genuine care is part of what Lipman calls “caring thinking” (cf. Lipman 1995). Specifically, he says that “thinking that values value is caring thinking” (ibid., p. 6) and that “When we are thinking caringly, we tend to what we take to be important, to what we care about, to what demands, requires or needs us to think about it” (ibid., p. 7). And he goes on to say that “Without caring, higher-order thinking is devoid of a values component. If higher-order thinking does not contain valuing or valuation, it is liable to approach its subject matters apathetically, indifferently, and uncaringly, and this means it would be diffident even about inquiry itself” (ibid., p. 12).

Children need to feel seen

Once selves have been summoned to the inquiry by through-and-through trapeze questions that focus on issues about which participants genuinely care, it is critical that the facilitator, thereafter, engage in communicative moves of the sort that entice participants to stay at the party. After all, if awareness of one’s self is a function of the degree to which one feels perceived by others, then facilitators must engage in strategies to make that

visibility apparent. Specifically, it will be suggested that, as far as it is appropriate within the confines of the inquiry, the facilitator ought to (a) question for clarity, (b) question for depth, and (c) respond for connection. We will deal with each of these in turn.

a) Questioning for clarity.

In supporting the claim that a facilitator ought not to hesitate to question for clarity, the author has argued elsewhere that:

since a facilitator cannot possibly facilitate a discussion unless she understands the points that are made by contributors, she must be prepared, contrary to the “facilitator-reticence” more commonly advocated, to question contributions until she herself experiences some hesitancy (Gardner 2011b, p. 357).

This suggestion, that facilitators ought to question to clarity, may be alarming to many. Since participants in CPIs are anything but expert in terms of articulating what it is that they want to say, the admonition that the facilitator ought to question to clarity will appear, to many, to be overly intrusive. The worry may be that participants, in an effort to ensure that they are understood, may tend to speak to the facilitator rather than to the group. This is why whether selves are present or not is such an urgent question. If the goal of the CPI is merely or even mostly an intellectual enterprise whose goal is to enhance critical thinking powers, then having a loose rein except to correct argumentative errors seems warranted. However, if educating selves is the goal, then capturing selves as they begin to appear by enhancing their clarity is essential, even if this requires the facilitator’s active involvement.

b) Questioning for depth

Having made the case for clarity, the case must now be made for going one step further. Aside from attempting to understand any given utterance, the facilitator ought to keep in mind the larger goal, and that is to get a glimpse of the utterer. In his book *Truth and Method* (Gadamer 2004), Gadamer, says that “understanding is always more than merely re-creating someone else’s meaning” (ibid., p. 368); that “a person who wants to understand must question what lies behind what is said.” And “If we go back behind what is said, then we inevitably ask questions beyond what is said” (ibid., p. 363)—we move into “the horizon of the other.”

The article “Authenticity: It Should and Can Be Nurtured” (Gardner and Anderson 2015) makes a similar point: in order to unleash the “agent power” of participants, facilitators, must get into the habit of asking the “second why” (Gardner 1996) so as to inquire how what is said (or done) fits into the pattern of who the person intends to become. Thus:

if, for example, the teacher asks Johnny why he hit Frankie, and Johnny responds that he hit Frankie because Frankie hit him, the teacher needs to ask again, but why did you think that hitting Frankie in response to him hitting you was a good idea? This is exactly the sort of language—this is exactly the sort of question—that gives birth to the kind of justificatory reflection that focuses on self-creation (Gardner and Anderson 2015, p. 397).⁴

⁴ Or within a CPI which focuses on the question of “why Gus said to Kio that her work was better,” a facilitator follow-up to the assertion that “Gus probably did it to make herself feel better” might be “Does saying negative things make us feel better? If so, why does it make us feel better? If it doesn’t make us feel better, why do we do it? Can anyone think of a personal experience that might help us understand this issue?”

This sort of second-layer questioning is “liberating” in the sense that this “utterer-,” as opposed to “utterance-focus,” foregrounds the self and thus brings it more into the focus and hence control of the agent.

Within the confines of a CPI, whose focus must also always be on the adequacy of the reasoning behind the utterance, advocating this sort of “person-perception” is a tall order and can only be accomplished more or less successfully. However, that the goal will always exceed the grasp should not be an excuse to shun it altogether. As long as the facilitator recognizes that person-perception is, to a greater or lesser extent, part of her mandate, then she will at least not be shy or reticent to question in a way that, in more traditional academic circumstances, might seem inappropriately personal.⁵ This, along with other strategies (such as making it a cardinal rule that everyone know everyone else’s name) will help create an environment in which participants recognize that their selves are welcome.

c) Responding for connection

Daniel Siegel, writing from the point of Interpersonal Neurobiology (IPNB), i.e., a field that studies how interpersonal interaction affects the structure of the brain, argues that interpersonal communicative interaction—both early in life and throughout adulthood—play a central role in

⁵ In the discussion referred to in footnote iii, for instance, when a participant said that he thought that spanking was OK because it changed behaviour, he was asked why he thought changing behaviour “in that way” was OK. This led to a discussion of his own up-bringing which subsequently led to extremely personal accounts by many of the participants, and even a few tears.

shaping the brain and, along with it, the ever-emerging mind (cf. Siegel 2012). Siegel stresses that what is important in shaping our identities is not just that we are involved in relationships per se, nor that we engage in interpersonal communication per se. What is important is that we are involved in “contingent communication” (ibid., p. 34), by which he means that we respond to one another in a way that suggests that the other is seen as having an internal centre of subjective life worthy of attention (ibid., p. 105); that, in communicating with the other, we are attempting to see the other’s minds—what Siegel refers to as “mind-sight” (ibid., p. 34). An integrated sense of self, or what Laing (1972) would refer to as a self “undivided,” requires, according to Siegel, integrative communication, i.e., communication that integrates us with one another, which, in turn, allows integrative neurophysiological changes to occur throughout life.

In discussing “contingent communication,” Gardner and Anderson (2015) cite R.D. Laing who articulated a similar theory some fifty years earlier. Thus, they note that:

R.D. Laing (1969) argued that how we communicate with one another can either have a confirming or disconfirming impact on one another’s identity, i.e., it can help or stultify the process of self-creation. To illustrate his point, he used the example of a 5-year old boy running to his mother saying “Mummy, look what a big worm I have got” (p. 102). The mother responds in a disconfirming or stultifying way in saying, “You are filthy—away and clean yourself immediately.” (Gardner and Anderson 2015, p. 398).

They go on to argue that:

What is important to note about this example is that Laing is not faulting the mother for not showing delight in being presented with a worm. Laing, rather, is faulting the mother for not seeing the boy by acknowledging the boy's agency. Specifically, Laing says of the mother that she fails "to endorse what the boy is doing from his point of view, namely showing his mummy a worm" (p. 103). Instead of using such "tangential" responses, Laing argues that we ought instead to use confirmatory responses. He describes a confirmatory response as a direct response; it is "to the point," or "on the same wavelength as the initiatory or evocatory action" (p. 99). Laing stresses that a confirmatory response need not (importantly) be in agreement, or gratifying, or satisfying. Rejection can be confirmatory if it is direct, not tangential, and recognizes the evoking action and grants it significance and validity. (Gardner and Anderson 2015, p. 398).

Against the more typical background assumption that facilitators stay out of the way of CPI interchanges (Kennedy, for instance, speaking rhetorically, talks of the facilitator being "killed and eaten" by the group (Kennedy 2004, p. 753), Gardner and Anderson (2015) bring up the above issue in order to make the point that it is critical that facilitators not be reticent about getting involved in a CPI dialogue. This is the point that is being made here. That is, aside from questioning for clarity, and aside from questioning for connection, it is perfectly legitimate for facilitators to respond in a way that says simply "I hear you." It is perfectly legitimate for facilitators to say e.g., "So you are telling me that ...," or "so you disagree with John when he says ...," before passing it off to the rest of the group to respond.

The moral of all of the above, in other words, is that if the transformation of selves is part of the goal of the P4C enterprise, then the responsibility lies with the facilitator not only to summon selves to this communicative adventure, but to be involved in such a way that selves stay engaged. This

will require much more than simply being a gate keeper for whose turn it is to respond, and much more even than ensuring that the quality of thinking is maintained. It is important for the facilitator to be keenly aware of the importance of selves (not merely talking bodies) getting involved, to know how to summon and maintain a “self-welcoming” atmosphere, which ultimately requires not only questioning for clarity, questioning for depth, and responding for connection, but, as well, that the facilitator bring herself to the party. It is to that topic that we shall now turn.

Educators need to show up

Though attachment is a concept that is usually discussed as applying (or not) to a parent-child relationship, it could just as easily be used to measure the success of a relationship between a teacher and student—or for our purposes, a facilitator and child—at least in its ability to conjure selves. With regard to the former, in their book *Hold On To Your Kids*, Neufeld and Mate argue that adults are losing the power to “hold on to our kids” precisely because that power comes *not* from technique, but from the quality of the adult-child relationship that is presently under threat due to both parents working, divorce, mobility, technology, etc. (cf. Neufeld and Mate 2005, p. 50)—and with regard to the educational adult-child relationship, they might have added an over-focus on the specifics of getting the practice right. Since this power to bond with our children is subtle, its absence will not be obvious to those who mistake it for force, obedience, or even learning outcomes.

The conundrum is, of course, that it is not at all clear how we can relate to our children if we cannot see them. But, on the other hand, it is not clear how we can see them if we ourselves do not show up.

And the problem becomes even more complex if we believe Buber (1958) when he tells us that whether or not we form a relationship with another is not entirely up to us; that genuine I-Thou relationships are formed in the “in-between.” The most that any of us can do, in other words, is to walk to the middle of the bridge and call out to the other in the hope that they will come forth. Walking to the middle of the bridge, in other words, is what is required of the facilitator who wishes to meet other selves so that they might benefit from the educational experience: from the inside, s/he must be genuinely engaged not only in the process, but with the participants—one with another—selves together.

A facilitator must keep in mind that just as she may mistake the presence of bodies for the presence of the selves of the CPI participants (see introduction), so she may mistake the fact that she shows up in body inevitably entails that her “self” shows up as well. This is not necessarily so. To “be there” as oneself is to be engaged, not as a technician, nor even as the lead inquirer; but to be there as the person that one is. This means that every facilitator will be utterly different from any other. This is scary stuff, as the corollary of this dictum is that one cannot keep a vision of some expert inquirer in one’s mind and just try one’s best to follow her moves. This means, rather, that just as every person is unique, so every facilitator’s “approach” will likewise be unique. This means then that, with regard to advice as to how best run a CPI, one must follow the wise

words of Ludwig Wittgenstein: Once one has climbed up the ladder, one must then throw it away (Wittgenstein 1961, p. 151); Once one gleaned all one can about the mechanics or the necessary conditions of running a successful CPI⁶, one must then show up as the person one truly is: as the person who laughs at what is funny, as the person who is surprised—even shocked—by what is surprising or shocking, and generally as the person who is clearly intent on being herself, so that others, too, may be comfortable in bringing themselves to the table.

When talking about training teachers, Neufeld and Mate mirror this point when they bemoan the lack of focus on “attachment” in departments of education (cf. Neufeld and Mate 2005, p. 34). As a result, educators “learn about teaching subjects but not about the essential importance of connected relationships” (ibid., p. 34). They argue that “There is a misconception with regard to techniques” (ibid., p. 55) in the sense that there is “an artificial reliance on experts.” “What matters is not the skill but the relationship. Attachment is not a behavior to be learned but a connection

⁶ In *The Thinking Playground* (<http://thinkingplayground.org/>), “the twelve rules of life,” or the necessary conditions for running a successful CPI have been articulated as follows:

1. **Fun**—the message is always that reasoning is fun.
2. **Relevant question**—based in a felt problem.
3. **Investigate for reasons**- help participants find their reasons.
4. **Repackage disagreement**-so you disagree with x said, right?
5. **Aware of campers**—names, no cell phones, etc.
6. **Contingent communication**—mind sight
7. **Genuine inquiry**—no hidden indoctrination
8. **Authenticity**—bring yourself to the table.
9. **Silent voices**—attempt to involve everyone (community)
10. **Model disagreement**—if none arises
11. **Translate into real life**—how might this dialogue affect your life?
12. **Hidden premise**—so you are saying that (hidden premise).

to be sought" (ibid.).

The risk of being present

Given that being is being perceived, and given that existence, at least to most, is a positive experience, one would have thought that solicitation of selves (so that they might develop and grow as Dewey, Taylor and Kennedy suggest by substituting ever more adequate self-representatives), at least if one used the sort of the educational strategies suggested here, would be a relatively easy matter. This is not necessarily so.

While from an objective view, selves clearly benefit from acquiring ever more adequate, ever more fluid self-representations, leaving behind an old self attached to old ideas is a treacherous business. When one jumps off a trapeze platform, it is not inevitable that one will land on the other side safely. This is uncertain territory, and recent findings in neuroscience have confirmed that most of us abhor uncertainty. In *On Being Certain: On Believing that You Are Right Even When You Are Not*, neurologist Robert Burton outlines studies of the brain that show the feeling of certainty has an addictive power similar to that of cocaine; both activate the limbic system, the brain's primary reward system (Burton 2008, p. 24).

Thus, even if facilitators ensure that the question that grounds the inquiry is a through-and-through, trapeze question about which the students care, and even if the facilitator questions for clarity and depth, and responds for connection, and even if the facilitator brings herself genuinely to the table in order to meet other selves in the in-between, those other

selves may still hunker in their shells, content in the safety to stasis. Responses such as “I believe that winning is the only important thing in a competition and that is just the way I think,” or “Nothing will convince me that it is not OK to hit back if someone hits you,” can be viewed as a participant “in essence” saying “I am who I am who I am: To nudge me into trying on different positions and different selves is tantamount to nudging me toward self-destruction.”

Thus, more than the above may be required to coax selves into the educational arena. We may need to add to our arsenal that facilitators quite literally explain to participants, before beginning a CPI, why autonomy (which is only possible through being open to opposing views) is imperative for the very existence of the self (Gardner 2009).

For now, though, the point is not so much to argue for specific self-conjuring strategies (though these are important), but rather to argue for the more fundamental truth, namely that the mere presence of bodies (or even minds) does not indicate the presence of “selves,” and that mere talking in no way indicates self-engagement. The point here is to alert facilitators that what otherwise might seem like a successful CPI with “whole youngsters,” may actually be a CPI with robots (either literally or figuratively). It is to alert facilitators that the way we teach and speak to children can either enhance the growth and integration of their evolving selves and it can do the reverse. It is to alert facilitators that for dialogical teaching to enhance personal power as well as reasoning skills it must be more than just dialogue; it must embody a kind of communicative interaction that, at the same time, enhances autonomy anchored in reasoning.

So the final message is the following: Since educating selves can be done at the same time as educating minds (e.g., nurturing reasoning skills), and since a CPI (unlike other educational strategies), in its dialogical structure, has the unique potential to solicit and hence educate selves, and since such “self-education” is an education for “making a life,” rather than the more common educative concern of educating for “making a living” (Postman 1995, p. x), it could be argued that facilitators who do not activate the unique power of a CPI to enhance personhood are remiss in their responsibility to their charges. And though the self-soliciting efforts of the sort described above may not always be successful, this may be the best we can do. Let us at least strive for that best.

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