

# Introduction: Philosophy, Education and the Care of the Self

Megan Laverty & Maughn Gregory



*We are inquiring, you know, in what way we shall become wise, presuming that each of us has this power in some sort or other ... (Plato 1964, 429)*

The papers collected in this special issue of *Thinking* were presented at the Group Meeting of the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children at the 2009 Annual Meeting of the American Philosophy Association, Eastern Division, in December 2009 in Manhattan. The theme of that session, to which these authors responded, was “Philosophy, Education and the Care of the Self.” Our aim in constructing this theme was to bring together two areas of scholarship, to which, we believe, Philosophy for Children has much to contribute, and from which it has much to learn.

The first area of scholarship we might refer to as ‘Philosophy as the Care of the Self,’ or ‘Philosophy as a Way of Life.’ Scholars working in this field practice and promote philosophy as a category of disciplines for ethical, aesthetic and psychological or spiritual self-transformation. This tradition begins with philosophers of Greek, Roman, Indian and Chinese antiquity, for whom the wisdom or *sophia* that philosophy pursues is not knowledge but a well-lived life. Richard Shusterman, for example, recommends “the idea of philosophy as a deliberative life-practice that brings lives of beauty and happiness to its practitioners,” and observes that “philosophy’s solutions to life’s riddles are not propositional knowledge but transformational practice” (1997, 25). Certain kinds of knowledge and understanding are, of course, necessary for this pursuit, but are not sufficient, because to truly live well – e.g., with purpose, integrity, equanimity and compassion – requires self-transformation through physical, intellectual and psychological exercise. As Martha Nussbaum explains, many of the ancients employed a medical analogy, describing philosophy as a set of therapeutic or curative practices for various diseases or afflictions of the soul. In this tradition, a *philosopher* is anyone who is engaged in self-confrontation and self-work, and need not be a scholar.

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Early accounts of philosophy as a way of life describe *whole ways* of life that included habits of diet and exercise, the discipline of desire, and the cultivation of worthy passions, meaningful friendships, helpful attitudes toward death, and many other aspects of caring for the self, the community, the stranger and the natural world. Scholarship in the form of theoretical discourse may help to explain and justify such ways of life, and certain forms of scholarly discipline – those that de-center the ego for the sake of reasonableness, fairness to others and truth – are themselves self-transformative practices. But as Socrates so tirelessly cautioned, discourse – even highly-disciplined, scholarly discourse – can also be a distraction from self-work, and even detrimental to it, e.g. when it becomes a means to self-aggrandizement. Jacob Needleman has observed that in both of Western culture’s originary traditions – Judaism and “Hellenic spiritual philosophy” – the ideal of reason was understood not merely as instrumentalist rationality freed from the passions, but as intellectual activity that combined such thinking with perceptive, intuitive and valuing capacities oriented to the real and the good (2002, 48). For this reason, philosophers in this tradition have, for centuries, disparaged philosophers whose work is merely academic – who, as Seneca put it, “turn love of wisdom (*philosophia*) into love of words (*philologia*)” (quoted in Hadot 2002, 174). In addition, they have advocated practical, somatic and contemplative exercises to accompany the cognitive practices of argumentation and conceptual analysis, as central to philosophy’s purpose.

One of the most important characteristics of philosophy practiced as the care of the self is that this practice can only begin from a genuine sense of self-discontentedness. This sense may derive from a more general sense of dissatisfaction, world weariness or suffering, but must, at some point, develop into an existential recognition of one’s own moral disorientation, spiritual *aporia*, or, at the very least, of one’s philosophical ignorance. So Socrates admonishes Alcibiades in this exchange:

ALC. ... Do you think I could not know about what is just and unjust in any other way [than being taught by a master]?

SOC. Yes, you might, supposing you discovered it.

ALC. But do you not think I might discover it?

SOC. Yes, quite so, if you inquired.

ALC. And do you not think I might inquire?

SOC. I do, if you thought you did not know. (Plato 1964, 121)

Without confronting our own lack of moral understanding and know-how, and without intimations of freer, happier, more meaningful ways of life, there is no way to begin the radical shift in orientation that signals philosophy (see Gregory 2009). Moreover, without particular knowledge of our own im/moral proclivities, we are at a loss as to how we might practice to ameliorate them. In Socrates' words, "if we have that knowledge, we are like to know what pains to take over ourselves; but if we have it not, we never can" (Plato 1964, 195). This imperative to appreciate one's precarious moral standing explains the abundance of practices for individual and communal self-questioning and self-reckoning within this tradition.

Another important characteristic of Philosophy as the care of the self is its development and employment of inquiry dialogue – dialogue as a rigorous, collaborative search for truth and meaning – as not only the most important method of philosophical inquiry, but the defining framework for all other wisdom practices. Discursive rationality requires, in addition to continual consultation of one's inner conscience, participation in mutual exchange, questioning, critique and assistance – all voluntary and conducted within a framework of cooperative inquiry toward a *logos* of uncoerced agreement. Needleman describes it in terms of paradox:

[R]eason as a spiritualizing force within ourselves ... can only arise in us through the struggle to listen to our neighbor. Consider the paradox: reason ... is at the same time the most individualistic and most communalistic of human capacities. Reason is the light from within myself *and* reason enters us only as we open to our neighbor. (2002, 61)

This practice requires a particular communicative ethics, characterized by humility, respect for others and a yearning for truth, in sharp contrast to the competitive, self-serving and often histrionic discourse that has typified political, courtroom, and even classroom discourse since ancient times. A third important characteristic of wisdom-oriented philosophy is therefore the establishment of the philosophical community, which makes possible not only pedagogical and inquiry dialogue, but also collaborative research, mutual concern, example and correction, and the cultivation of intimate philosophical friendship, "the spiritual exercise *par excellence*" (Hadot 1995, 89). As Socrates demonstrated, this kind of relationship is also necessary for pedagogy that aims at wisdom:

SOC... but we must put our heads together, you know, as to the way in which we can improve ourselves to the utmost. For observe that when I speak of the need of being educated I am not referring only to you, apart from myself .... [W]e need to take pains—all men rather badly, but we two very badly indeed.

ALC. As to me, you are not wrong.

SOC. Nor, I fear, as to myself either. (Plato 1964, 175)

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The second area of scholarship referenced in the theme for this special issue might be referred to as 'Education and the Care of the Self.' Scholars working in this field examine the ways that schooling both contributes to, and undermines personal development and self-transformation toward wellbeing (see Gregory and Lavery 2009). Philosophy was the first discipline to take up this concern, as the education of the young bears directly on their aptitude and orientation for self-care. Ancient philosophers critiqued educators and educational programs that focused on materialistic and banal objectives to the detriment of students' intellectual, aesthetic, civic and moral development and self-awareness. Hadot notes, for instance, that in ancient Athens,

Sophists had claimed to train young people for political life, but Plato wanted to accomplish this by providing them with a knowledge ... inseparable from the love of the good and from the inner transformation of the person. Plato wanted to train not only skillful statesmen, but also human beings (2002, 59).

Since that time philosophers have inquired into education's aims and methods, the nature of learning and thinking, the nature and status of knowledge, the educational responsibilities of students, parents, teachers and governments, and relationships between education and theories of epistemology, ethics and social justice. Though divergent on many points, philosophers who have considered education – e.g., Plato, Aristotle, Montaigne, Rousseau, Dewey, Whitehead, and Freire – have largely maintained consensus around the Socratic imperative for wisdom-oriented education. This imperative is being urged today by contemporary philosophers of education like Maxine Green (2000; 2001), Nel Noddings (2005), Parker Palmer (1993; 2007), bell hooks (1994; 2003), Matthew Lipman (1988; 1996; 2003) and Mike Rose (1996; 2005; 2009).

In spite of this work, education in many parts of the world has tended to focus more on student's economic viability and the reinforcement of conventional values, than on their hunger for meaning and their capacities for reflection and self-directed growth, and has lately been reconstituted to a significant extent as short- and long-term test preparation. In Rose's estimation, "We've narrowed the purpose of schooling to economic competitiveness, our kids becoming economic indicators. We've reduced our definition of human development and achievement—that miraculous growth of intelligence, sensibility, and the discovery of the world—to a test score. (Rose 2009. x) Underlying this status quo is a largely unarticulated view that the primary purpose of education is to prepare students to be successful at pursuing relatively unexamined desires in a free-market economy. Indeed, as Robert J. Sternberg has observed, this view is sometimes promoted deliberately by educational stakeholders.

Sternberg is among contemporary psychologists who have considered what it would mean to make wisdom a primary objective for education. He recommends that education “not ... force-feed a set of values but ... encourage students to reflectively develop their own,” (1999, 80) and that it place particular emphasis “on the development of dialectical thinking [which] involves thinkers understanding significant problems from multiple points of view and understanding how others legitimately could conceive of things in a way that is quite different from one’s own.” (1999, 79-80). Education as the care of the self, in other words, must engage young people in the practice of philosophy (see Laverty 2008). In support of this notion Sternberg has cited *Philosophy for Children* as one of three educational programs he found “particularly related to the goals of ... teaching for wisdom” (Sternberg 2003, 163). Likewise, Harvard psychologist and originator of multiple intelligence theory Howard Gardner has identified seven approaches or “entry points” to teaching school subjects that map onto multiple intelligences, one being the “foundational (or existential) entry point [which] examines the philosophical and terminological facets” of a subject and provides the opportunity for students “to pose fundamental questions of the ‘why’ sort associated with young children and philosophers ....” Not surprisingly, Gardner recommends *Philosophy for Children* for this approach (2006).



*Diogenes and Alexander* by Giovanni Battista Langetti

In many times and places education has been aimed at growth or self-improvement that is oriented to truth, beauty and goodness in some objective sense, and that is intended for communities as well as for individuals. Indeed, the wisdom literature makes the searches for personal and collective wellbeing interdependent. Needleman observes, e.g., that,

... the unspoken undercurrent of early American idealism holds out the goal of the striving to work on one’s own moral defects—through self-struggle and education—in order to approach the capacity to will what is good for the whole of humanity. Carried too far without the concomitant inner struggle for individual self-improvement, ... the spirit of part[isanship] ... inevitably destroys the moral foundations of the community. (2002, 94.)

Wisdom-oriented education therefore gives special attention to

citizenship education, not merely as knowledge of government and history, much less the cultivation of nationalistic patriotism, but as the cultivation of the disposition to inquire after, and to will the common good. This necessarily involves practice in the kind of discursive rationality described above. It also involves what Lipman described as “harness[ing] and put[ting] to work the social impulses of the child—in contrast to the imperial, divide-and-rule strategy that some teachers ... employ” (1996, xv), and the creation of “civic space” in schools, described by Rose in terms of “the power of bringing students together around common problems and projects—the intellectual and social energy that results, generating vital public space” (2009, 151).

Rose is also among educational theorists who pay attention

to the daily, lived experience of schooling undergone by students, teachers, administrators and parents – an important aspect of education that prioritizes the care of the self. Dewey argued that ethical, political, aesthetic and spiritual values were grounded in the felt qualities of experience (1934; 1934; 1962; 1939; 1972), and Rose identifies a number of experiences typical of a day at school, that are rich in Dewey’s sense of the qualitative: “the experience of opportunity ... [as] feel[ing] a sense of possibility, of hope” (2009, 14), “the emerging desire to improve and to be more competent—both for my satisfaction and to gain [a respected teacher’s] approval” (15), the “desire to do

a job correctly, to make something work” (90), “knowledge [as] a source of pleasure and competence” (66), “the deep emotional satisfaction of using my mind” (16), “the sense of stability that steady work can bring” (19), and also the tedium of “classrooms as ... places of flat disconnection” (33).

Learning to be mindful of the qualitative nature of our experiences is a necessary component of self-regulation, and hence of self-care (see Gregory 2006). For this reason, a number of scholars and practitioners of Asian philosophical, religious mystical and Hellenistic wisdom schools have introduced contemplative practices to schools, for the benefit of teachers and administrators, as well as students (see Adarkar and Keiser 2007; Zajonc 2008; Greenland 2010). Such practices as dialogue, storytelling, journaling, calligraphy, contemplative movement, and mindful breathing are meant to mitigate the mental distraction and emotional reactivity so often experienced in schools, with mindful engagement in the experiences of teaching and learning and with deliberate, self-

aware responses to the myriad problems and opportunities that arise there. These practices also help young people cultivate a sense of self-agency, both in the immediate circumstances that call for action and choice, and also in the broader sense of “self-definition” (Rose 2009, 92) and an “emerging sense of who [they] can become” (Rose 2009, 4). In this latter sense, Rose writes of how his own experiences of schooling,

... helped me develop a sense of myself as knowledgeable and capable of using what I know. This is a lovely and powerful quality—cognitive, emotional, and existential all in one. It has to do with identity and agency, with how we define ourselves, not only in matters academic but also in the way we interact with others and with institutions.... Education gave me the competence and confidence to independently seek out information and make decisions, to advocate for myself and ... those I taught, to probe political issues, to resist simple answers to messy social problems, to assume that I could figure things out and act on what I learned (2009, 37-8).

Rose’s educational autobiography is an informative account of education as a means of self-care. His work, like that of hooks, Palmer, Zajonc and others, also demonstrates that the concern for wisdom in education that was once the purview of philosophy is today more often addressed in sociology, critical theory and spirituality studies. If philosophy is to continue to be relevant to this work, it must recover its love of wisdom, extend its practices beyond the theoretical, and make itself accessible to those outside the academy, including children.

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It was my hunch that children were primarily intent on obtaining meaning—this is why they so often condemned school as meaningless—and wanted meanings they could verbalize.... I saw philosophy as the discipline par excellence for making sense of things and for preparing students to think in the more specific disciplines.” (Lipman 1996, xv.)

Although Philosophy for Children is sometimes adopted by schools as primarily a thinking skills program, practitioners have always appreciated its power to evoke profound personal growth. The program’s value orientation derives from the way it construes philosophy itself: as a yearning or wondering toward truth or meaningfulness, with implications for students’ everyday lives (Gregory 2002; 2008). The program materials focus on questions having to do with ethics, aesthetics, epistemology, politics and other topics relevant to the care of the self, as issues with direct bearing on children’s experience. Moreover, the program’s principal mode of practice – the community of philosophical inquiry (CPI) – is, ideally, an instantiation of the wisdom practices of discursive rationality,

mindful speech, philosophical friendship and ethical community. In this issue of *Thinking* we have brought together a number of scholars working in Philosophy for Children who take the program’s value orientation seriously, and who see many of the program’s objectives, materials and methods as relevant to, if not instances of, the care of the self.

The scholars in this issue express a range of views about what it means to know, and care for, the self; yet, each view involves the CPI, both as an epistemological method that moves in the direction of unified, true belief, and as a “spiritual exercise” that moves in a contrary direction to reveal our ignorance and our reliance on others, even for self-knowledge. Darryl De Marzio, Walter Kohan and Jason Wozniak do not consider the self to be a substance or entity with a predetermined identity, but something conferred by, and thus revealed in, its practices and relationships. For these authors, communal philosophical inquiry is constitutive of subjectivity because it circumscribes a self that is always in question and open to the possibility of self-transformation. Jason Howard and Laurance Splitter favor a more traditional view of the self, drawing upon continental and analytic sources, respectively. Howard draws from the writings of Paul Ricoeur to develop a conception of conscience as dialectical, self-interpretative narrative, while Splitter draws on the work of Donald Davidson to develop a triangular conception of consciousness in which self, others and world are interconnected. These authors conceive of the self as having a psycho-social identity that is in constant formation – we are always becoming – and relational – we exist in language and society. Even private introspection implies the existence of a community because it consists in internalized dialogical interaction with others. Therefore, to know the self is to recognize and understand something about our identity, i.e. the kind of person one has become; and to care for the self is to consciously engage in the betterment or amelioration of that identity. Howard and Splitter endorse communal philosophical inquiry on the grounds that it is a practice that instantiates relationality. For Splitter, the CPI helps us know ourselves as it educates us to live well with others, while for Howard, it reinforces our sense of inherent plurality, making us more willing to accept moral ambiguity. That Splitter and Howard are able to connect these diverse traditions with the care of the self, shows that the wisdom tradition has relevance beyond its origins in ancient and renaissance philosophy.

Irrespective of differences in emphasis, the scholars in this issue value the community of philosophical inquiry as much for its destabilizing propensities as for its methodological strengths. The CPI operationalizes our epistemological aims of seeking truth and goodness, but reveals that these aims are only ever imperfectly fulfilled, and that they cannot be fulfilled to any extent without our also fulfilling educative and ethical aims. It is by allowing ourselves to undergo education that we come to experience the world more truthfully, reconstruct our relationships with others and encounter multiple and divergent possibilities of the self. This multiplicity is one of the CPI’s profoundly destabilizing effects. If the self is revealed in its

dialogical interactions with others, then it is also called into question by them. A tension is immediately created between the given and the possible self; the known and the unknown; the old and the new, and this tension provides the impetus for individual self-transformation.

In “Emotions of Self-Assessment and Self-Care: Cultivating an Ethical Conscience,” Howard relates this tension to the cultivation of an ethical conscience. Originally the result of internalized norms, our sense of accountability – as manifested in shame, guilt, pride and other emotions of self-assessment – becomes increasingly subject to critical analysis, self-assessment and revision. These processes relate the conscience to more transcendent, impersonal ethical standards but also to a variety of external moral commitments and sources, necessitating an unending struggle to integrate them. For Howard, then, the cultivation of ethical conscience involves a perpetual process of dialectical self-interpretation, which he recommends initiating by engaging children in fair and exploratory discussion and assessment of norms with others, as typified in Philosophy for Children. Howard argues that the pedagogy and curriculum of Philosophy for Children is informed by the recognition that our commitments and identities are shaped by our interactions with others. Engagement in communal philosophical inquiry blurs boundaries between the known and the unknown and between self and other, demonstrating that we are not self-sufficient. This practice reveals that children lack moral certitude, not because they are pre- or provisional adults, but because they share in the human condition. Philosophy for Children presumes that all individuals will come undone in the course of the discussion, to then be reintegrated in the spirit of reciprocity and growth. In the language of Howard, reflecting on what matters with others simultaneously de-centers the self and encourages individuals to care more fully for the self.

Splitter is also interested in communal philosophical inquiry as a practice of self-care that is necessarily mediated by our interactions with others around values and beliefs. In “Caring for the self as *one-among-others*,” he approaches this practice via philosophy of language, arguing that thinking and speaking are interdependent which, in turn, makes dialogue (as a mode of speaking) and inquiry (as a mode of thinking) interdependent also. Splitter relates the care of the self to three dimensions of care needed for any successful CPI: interpersonal care that generates intellectual and emotional safety, care for the procedures of robust, open-ended inquiry, and care about the philosophical topic under consideration. He refers to the work of Donald Davidson to defend the pedagogical use of the community of inquiry against the claim that inter-subjective dialogue cannot make the thinking of inexperienced participants correspond to disciplinary thinking, let alone to the objective world. Davidson’s “triangulated” view that knowledge of one’s own mind, other minds and the world are epistemologically interdependent, means that subjective thought entails objective commitments, including the recognition of a shared world. Because communication

mediates thought and reality – including the thinking of others, and one’s own and others’ non-discursive experience with the world – it is the primary mechanism both for epistemological self-correction and for the kinds of care Splitter advocates.

Splitter highlights a normative plank of Davidson’s epistemology that is operative in Philosophy for Children: his “principle of charity,” which requires us to listen to others under the presumption of truth, i.e. *as if* what the other is saying were true. This imperative derives from the triangulation of knowledge, which makes it impossible to determine *a priori* the potential relevance or meaningfulness of what is said. Splitter rightly argues for the application of Davidson’s “principle of charity” to our treatment of children. In so far as they communicate linguistically, children necessarily participate in the triangulation of self, others and the world that makes possible knowledge and relationships of care, both among themselves and with the adults with whom they share the world.

The question of children’s fitness to participate in philosophical dialogue and otherwise to practice self-care is taken up in Darryl De Marzio’s essay, “Dialogue, the Care of the Self, and the Beginning of Philosophy.” De Marzio relates Plato’s apparent ambivalence about the right time for introducing children to philosophy – not before they are old enough to care about truth and therefore take philosophy as more than a sport, but not too late for philosophy’s self-correcting practices to make a difference in their lives – to the proper beginning of philosophy – recognition of one’s ignorance and moral deficiencies – and its proper end – seeking truth. De Marzio makes use of Foucault’s argument that we must prepare for philosophy, as the search for truth, by first becoming subjects of truth ourselves. This entails, in the tradition of Socrates, coming to terms with our own epistemic and moral deficiencies, viz., that we have been concerned with the wrong things: reputation, honor, and physical pleasure. De Marzio draws on the Socratic notion of caring for the soul by engaging in activities that mirror the self to itself, and recommends philosophical dialogue as one such activity. The CPI is a never-ending cycle of self-questioning, inquiry, and quasi-stable self-correction, which inevitably becomes unstable at some time, giving rise to further self-questioning. The practice of self-care does not culminate in finally becoming wise and abandoning that practice. Rather, increased wisdom means increased capacities for self-scrutiny and self-correction. Ironically, on this view, philosophy as the search for truth is both the beginning *and* the end of philosophy as the care of the self.

The value of the community of philosophical inquiry, as a practice of self-care, transcends, and in our view justifies its other benefits, such as improvements in questioning (Scholl 2005), literacy (Yeazell 1982), argumentation (Lipman 1984), ethical reasoning (Lipman 1987) emotional intelligence (Lipman 1995) citizenship (Lipman 1991; 1997) and violence prevention (Lipman 1995). This value commitment goes against the grain of the educational status quo described above,

the culture of which makes it difficult for teachers to sustain the day-to-day rituals and activities that enhance the dignity and meaningfulness of the educational project and those involved in it. The CPI is one such activity. In many respects, as Kohan and Wozniak observe, it engages teachers and students in a process of unlearning, of “emptying” themselves of presumptions to knowledge, methodology, and authority. In “Philosophy as Spiritual and Political Exercise in an Adult Literacy Course,” they argue that if teachers are to encourage students to practice self-care by way of collaborative philosophical inquiry, they must have experienced this themselves. The experiment Kohan and Wozniak conducted in a suburb of Rio de Janeiro encouraged teachers to refrain from thinking of themselves as providing students with information, skills or dispositions they would otherwise lack, but as creating conditions that enable their students to come to care for things they might not otherwise care for, including their selves. Wozniak and Kohan’s examination of the CPI as a practice of self-care emphasizes its interpretative dimension. In the tradition of Paulo Freire, they argue that interpretive texts – including images, words, and life experiences – volunteered by students reveal something about how they read the world and themselves, while the practice of inquiry calls those readings into question, culminating in altered visions of the world and new possibilities for action, in some cases leading to the empowerment of people to actively resist oppression.

The final contributor to this issue, Olivier Michaud, is a Canadian doctoral student at Montclair State University who attended a ten-day international seminar on Philosophy for Children co-directed by the editors of this issue. The seminar was held at an Episcopal convent in the woods of Mendham, New Jersey, on the theme of “Philosophy as a Way of Life.” Participants lived, ate, studied and played together, and while they engaged in CPI in the mornings and evenings, they were encouraged to spend the afternoons in contemplative activities (running, walking, reading, writing, etc.). Disillusioned with academic philosophy, Michaud initially did not see the connection between the ostensible purpose of the seminar – ‘to do philosophy’ – and his personal, spiritual quest for meaning. But the qualities of the seminar allowed him to rediscover that connection, as he narrates in “Monastic Meditations on Philosophy and Education.” Michaud’s essay weaves together many of the themes of this issue in a very personal way. He begins in a state of Socratic *aporia*, feeling that there is something he needs – an existential correction of some sort – yet unsure of what it might be: “I’m here to find a question I want to answer.” He introduces dimensions of the wisdom tradition not touched on by the other contributors such as the unity of mind and body and the potential for somaesthetic practices of self-care. He calls us to see Philosophy for Children as one element of a much broader educational practice dedicated to self-care, that would include being in nature, diet, and being present. As he narrates his shifting relationship to the workshop, Michaud conveys a sense of philosophy as pilgrimage: a seeking of truths that cannot yet be conceived, a

journeying of the self and a retreat from ordinary routines in order to heighten and sensitize reflective awareness.

Michaud also recalls the love or erotic desire that informs both philosophy and education as the care of the self. For one thing, we educate children for wisdom because we love them. We want them to flourish, to have rich and fulfilling lives, which is synonymous with wisdom. For another, we expect that children, like us, will be drawn to wisdom when they encounter it. Most of us can recall being moved by a teacher, a friend, a heroic person, a legend or a work of literature or art that instantiated beauty, or fineness, to use Aristotelian terminology. Ironically, it is sometimes difficult to say what such wisdom consists in, except to say that we find it exemplary and are inspired to realize it ourselves. This is why, as Needleman explains, “reason must free itself from the thrall of the passions, but not from the exquisite and essential subtlety of the feeling/valuing component of the mind, a component which is an absolutely necessary part of authentic human reason” (2002, 48-9).

Philosophy practiced as ‘a way of life’ can be understood as a program for improving our character or otherwise making us better individuals than we currently are. This is one of the meanings of “practice” – as we practice playing tennis or wood carving, in order to improve our performance. But we emphasize this instrumental value of philosophy at the risk of losing sight of its intrinsic value, namely that it is the kind of activity that beings like us should be engaged in. We are meaning-seeking creatures who exist relationally, especially linguistically. For these reasons, we need to reflect communally about the things that matter to us. We need to engage with eternal questions and with our individual and collective moral opacity. In this sense, we – including children – practice philosophy as doctors practice medicine and lawyers practice law: as a manifestation of who we are and the kind of life we have chosen. In this sense, as the contributors here explain, philosophy is not something we practice in order to become the kind of subject who no longer needs that practice. Rather, it is a way of life, and as Dewey argued, the same may be said of education:

We always live at the time we live and not at some other time, and only by extracting at each present time the full meaning of each present experience are we prepared for doing the same thing in the future. This is the only preparation which in the long run amounts to anything. (Dewey 1938; 1967, 49.)

This is also the import of the spiritual / philosophical dimensions of teaching and learning. The teacher’s manner and bearing, her presence and indeed, her very being, can be instantiations of beauty that awaken the children’s desire for wisdom – for study and play and work and friendship that are typified by such beauty. And as most Philosophy for Children practitioners have experienced, this philosophical pedagogy is entirely reciprocal.

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