Transforming Education through Meditative Dialogue: 
The Literacy of Crossing Worlds

A Senior Thesis
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In our global and technological age, our children are being exposed to cultures, worldviews, and perspectives from around the world, and have the opportunity to learn from these diverse traditions. However, this diversity gives rise to a fundamental question, that is, how can we dilate our minds in order to appreciate and understand a way of life different from our own? The art of crossing worlds through dialogue lies at the heart of philosophy, and it is for this reason that education must now address the issues relevant to our time by nurturing students’ dialogical and rational abilities in order to pave the way to a societal structure grounded in mindfulness, critical and meditative reasoning, and compassion, that does not objectify the Other.

Philosophical education should develop students’ intelligence and awareness, and give them the skills of how to think (not what to think) so that they can question their assumptions and their worldview, strengthen their reasoning abilities and their awareness, and learn how to communicate and connect with others regardless of their worldview. This need to promote and facilitate the ethics of dialogue across worldviews can be accomplished through the philosophy for children pedagogy, and by engaging in deep dialogue. Thus, the primary objective of this thesis is to explore pre-college philosophical education and pedagogy, and the way in which it creates a space where students can learn the art and ethics of dialoging across worlds in a non-objectifying manner. Learning to philosophize requires understanding others and crossing into their worldview without objectifying it, and it is for this reason that philosophical education must provide a safe space where deep, profound dialogue can take place.
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Introduction

From ancient times to modern, our wisdom teachers have believed that in order to create a world of true peace, it is imperative that we educate and coach ourselves and our children in compassion and wisdom to become holistic beings and connect with others. While there are many avenues to choose from when tackling the multitude of crises that plague our world today, I limit this thesis to the issue of education, for it is my view that our societal institutions reflect the structure of our education, and that if we transform education, we inevitably remodel the structure of our society and of our institutions.

Primary and secondary educational institutions are perhaps the primary influences in a child’s life following that of the parents. Upon serious examination of the educational methods used in schools, educators (in the United States, but also from other countries like Japan and China) are beginning to find that many of the current instructional curriculums and pedagogies have been found to be obsolete and unsuccessful at nurturing students with a global literacy to understand diverse forms of life. Certainly, schools impart knowledge onto them, and provide them with basic academic and test-taking skills, but these are not the only marks of being an educated and intelligent student. There is a tendency to become stuck in patterns of memorization and fixate on our own narrow conceptual framework, thus, closing ourselves off to alternative ideas and worldviews. As I will demonstrate in this work, the cultivation of intelligence is vital for a global student of wisdom, but many of our educational models have been favoring the accumulation of information and facts, and have strayed from the cultivation of wisdom. In other words, we have been teaching students what to think and how they should live their lives, instead

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1 While other matters such as family values and economic classes play a role in this, I feel education can have an even greater impact than most other factors. If we are to intelligently face the issues that affect our world, we require new and innovative ways to educate the younger generations. If we cannot take responsibility and solve the problems we have created, the least we can do is try to equip the next generations with the skills to face them.

2 "Education as it is at present in no way encourages the understanding of the inherited tendencies and environmental influences which condition the mind and heart and sustain fear, and therefore it does not help us to break through these conditionings and bring about an integrated human being. Any form of education that concerns itself with a part and not with the whole of man inevitably leads to increasing conflict and suffering." Krishnamurti, J. (1981). Education and the Significance of Life. (San Francisco: Harper & Row), pgs. 28-29.
of developing their sense of how to think and the importance of being aware of the way they conduct their minds in the world.

In our global and technological age, our children are being exposed to cultures, worldviews, and perspectives from around the world, and have the opportunity to learn from these diverse traditions. However, despite the advantages of globalization, we must also face its obstacles. Multiplicity, while potentially enriching our view of the world, can also breed conflict and disunity when not soundly integrated into one's own conceptual framework. From the standpoint of the ego (defined here as a standpoint of objectification wherein all experience and testimony is filtered through our own lens), one feels "knowledgeable" having learned about different conceptions of life, but it is crucial to consider how these forms of living are integrated in a coherent manner into one's own way of being in the world. Philosophers and religious traditions from around the globe have been advocating that to truly change our world and progress on the path towards peace and unity, we will have to change the way in which we are conducting our minds so that we embody compassion and wisdom. We can do this by awakening our meditative intelligence and becoming critically reflective, and this will allow us to deeply connect with our fellow human beings. As rational beings, we have a responsibility to optimize our relationships and connection with ourselves, others, and the world, regardless of ego-based discriminations like race, religion, gender, nationality, age, and other such distinctions. With the vast plurality of worldviews and cultures in nearly all areas of life, it is necessary for cross-cultural and interfaith dialogue, coupled with a sensitivity that appreciates diversity, to be prevalent in society. Thus, the primary objective of this thesis is to explore pre-college philosophical education and pedagogy, and the way in which it creates a space of dialoging across worlds. Learning to philosophize requires understanding others and crossing into their worldview without objectifying it, and it is for this reason that philosophical education must provide a safe space where deep, profound dialogue can take place.

This great task of educating our children to be open to wisdom must not be limited to lectures and feeding information, but must provide a way for students to cultivate their mind in a holistic sense
by plunging into the depths of philosophy. We must ask ourselves, what are the fundamental goals of education? If we tell ourselves that education is merely memorizing facts, taking tests, acquiring theoretical skills for a job, or indulging the intellect with all kinds of information, then I think we have strayed quite far from wisdom and intelligence ourselves. Nowadays, education should help us awaken our capacities of intelligence, and provide a space to acquire a global literacy, so that we can cross worlds and dialogue with others while respecting their worldview. In the words of Jiddu Krishnamurti, “The purpose of education is not to produce mere scholars, technicians and job hunters, but integrated men and women who are free of fear; for only between such human beings can there be enduring peace. It is in the understanding of ourselves that fear comes to an end.” While much can be said on the topic of fear, for my purpose here on education, fear inhibits creativity and intelligence, and this prevents exploration into oneself. Dialogue across worlds requires an environment free of fear, for only then will people feel comfortable stepping into the lens of another. So long as there is fear, people “close up” and feel as though they must be defensive; such circumstances oppose what this kind of philosophical education tries to do, namely, live the examined life, and cross worlds through dialogue. The real key is giving people the tools and creating an environment where people can learn to cross worlds. In other words, how can we dilate our minds in order to appreciate and understand a way of life different from our own?

Growing as a student is not limited to acquiring knowledge, but also learning how to interact with people and considering how others make sense of the world. Such a skill requires learning the art and ethics of dialogue, that is, a way of inquiring into the framework of the other without violating it in order to engender real appreciation, empathy, and understanding. To address such issues, the growth of the student must include not only learning the art of dialogue, but also understanding the importance of empathy and understanding in the context of global dialogue. This understanding should extend to recognizing the value of diverse perspectives and the need to respect and appreciate cultural differences.

3 Ibid., pgs. 14-15.
4 Uniting to face the dilemmas of the human condition, and seeing that cultures across the globe have been trying to address such issues, inter-religious, cross-cultural, and philosophical dialogue would no longer be fragmented and filled with polar splits as we see in our current situation. As Ashok Gangadean points out, people who privilege their standpoint and absolutize their worldview perpetuates “the ongoing clash of worldviews and perspectives through the ages – with genocides, wars, crusades, holocausts, ethnic cleansing, slavery, colonial dominance, religious persecution, and many other forms of violence, hermeneutical abuse, gender violence, sexism, racism, and the like” Gangadean, A. K. (2009), Meditations of Global First Philosophy: Quest for the Missing Grammar of Logos. (New York: State University of New York Press), p. 102.
philosophy for children approach has been a driving force in changing education by incorporating philosophical inquiries in the classroom and changing the learning environment as a whole. P4c is a style of inquiry, an approach by which the people participating learn to enrich their experience of life, refine their reasoning abilities, reanalyze their identity, cultivate compassion, expand their worldview, and dilate their minds through dialogue. If one were to create an environment that allows students to engage in deep ontological self-reflection and dialogue with other worlds, they can learn to become global citizens. Learning to conduct our minds in this manner allows us to promote harmony and compassion for all beings, for we come to understand the vast relationships that constitute our being. This need to promote and facilitate the awakening of a holistic mind and to pave the way towards global unity can be accomplished through the philosophy for children (p4c) pedagogy, and by engaging in deep dialogue.

For the purposes of this work, I distinguish between two types of reflection: critical and meditative. Critical reflection here refers to “zeroing in” on a subject; it focuses on calculative reasoning and uncovering the complexity of the issue. Meditative reflection means an “opening up” or expanding the ways we approach a subject. This type refers to the acknowledgement and understanding that there are many different perspectives on the issue. While I do not wish to limit these two to simple definitions, the former can be thought of as analytical thinking and reasoning in order to understand things, and the latter as awareness and mindfulness in order to understand persons, and to see that there are multiple ways of understanding a subject. These two are not mutually exclusive, but in fact, augment each other. Critical reflection is typically the only type stressed in education, where the latter is a practice seldom considered. Critical reflection allows reasoning and analytical skills to develop, and meditative reflection allows creativity and intelligence to arise, and also enables one to crossover to different perspectives and worlds in a pure way, i.e., without stereotypes and judgments, but rather with understanding and compassion. The kind of reasoning we use to understand things in the world is not helpful when trying to understand other people or ourselves, and thus, we need to shift to a new logic.
that is more conducive to understanding relationships. In other words, we have been using critical reflection (reasoning to understand things/objects) to also communicate with each other, which leads to objectifying others and their standpoint. Relating and communicating with people means coming to see them as persons, not as objects; this is where meditative reflection is vital, as it allows us to step back from privileging our view and objectifying others, to a deep opening up to the Other and their world. This shift of encountering another as an object to a person is the transition from an I-It to an I-Thou technology of mind. Learning to understand each other is a fundamental skill of being a human being, and thus, understanding persons is front and center in the philosophy for children approach.

In my studies of philosophy for children (p4c), one of the most compelling aspects about this approach was how drastically different it was from my own education. This feeling seems to be a communal one, as many adults who experience a p4c session feel that the educational approaches they have had in their own experience did not give rise to elements like (intellectual) safety in the classroom and understanding others. While I focus on the p4c approach to philosophical education here, I will at times contrast it with certain tendencies and patterns present in educational settings. Without that contrast, it can be difficult for the reader to see just how important simple things like safety and deep listening are. My intention in providing these contrasts is not to condemn other pedagogies, but merely to give an idea of how p4c can address these limiting tendencies that other approaches are susceptible to.

Finally, I would like note that the philosophical pedagogy examined here was designed for K through grade 12 classrooms, but since the approach varies slightly depending on the grade, I shall focus on the high school level. The principles, despite the grade, are the same, but clarifying how one would adjust them to incorporate it at the varying levels would be much too technical and quite lengthy for the aim of this work.

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5 The I-It and I-Thou distinction borrowed from the work of Martin Buber.

6 At least, this was the case in my class at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa. All 30 to 40 of us in the class, ranging from 20 to 60 years old, all felt the same way: the p4c approach resonated with us, and made us aware of what Thomas Jackson calls the “wounds of schooling.” Reflecting on our own educational upbringing, we were able to see just how different this approach was from what we experienced in school, and how much of an impact it had on us.
The Foundations of Philosophical Education

The philosophy for children movement was devised by Matthew Lipman in the 1960s, and is now carried forward by like-minded individuals such as Thomas Jackson and Benjamin Lukey, who strive to “develop children’s ability to think for themselves and to learn to use that ability in responsible, caring ways.”7 When Lipman created p4c, it was a time when the art of philosophy was monopolized by academic philosophers; society and academic philosophers ignored and overlooked the fact that children naturally inquire into the world, and are natural philosophers in their own right. Some of our current pedagogical techniques actually narrow children’s mind to search for the answer the teacher is looking for, rather than strengthening their rational abilities. As a result, their spontaneity, creativity, and sense of intuition, which is the seed of intelligence and questioning, is lost.8 Furthermore, in her essay, “Philosophy and Education: A Gateway to Inquiry,” Jana Mohr Lone says that “K-12 education does not generally value questions and questioning. When teachers pose questions in classrooms, usually they are not attempting to initiate an inquiry about the question or to demonstrate the value of questioning, but rather are seeking a specific answer from the students. In philosophy, however, questions are central, and they are the gateways to inquiry.”9 Creativity and wonderment are intricately linked, and when creativity is suppressed, wonderment also diminishes. Philosophical thought and progress is grounded in these forces, and if they are inhibited, all that is left is rote memory and past knowledge, nothing new.

Benjamin Lukey, the associate director of the p4c Hawai‘i Center, remarks that “the relative absence of philosophy and philosophers in public [and in private] primary and secondary schools should trigger alarm bells, for it indicates certain disconcerting limitations of both education and academic

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8 "This imitation of what we should be [and what we should think], breeds fear; and fear kills creative thinking," Krishnamurti, J. (1981). Education and the Significance of Life. (San Francisco: Harper & Row), p. 57.
philosophy as currently conceived and practiced.”10 Some people feel that philosophy is far too complex for young minds, and that it would be a waste of time and money to attempt such an endeavor.

To quell these concerns, however, I shall point out two of the essential principles of p4c. First, p4c inquiries are not centered on bringing in texts or philosophers to study their theories, but rather, it focuses on starting where the students are. In other words, the teacher, or facilitator of the group, tries to gauge where the students are in their thinking and how they are thinking, and works to develop their reasoning abilities from there. Through creating a community in the classroom, the students can begin to share how they see the world, and can consider different issues from a multitude of standpoints.

Certainly, this will generate empathy and compassion, but this will also allow students to realize that their peers are seeing and living in the world from a different standpoint, which should be respected. Philosophers and texts can be brought in as a way to launch the inquiry and conversation, and to show that others were struggling with similar issues the students are facing, but not to lecture on or memorize their theories.

In relation to the first point, I wish to point out two types of philosophical approaches. Dr. Thomas Jackson, one of the current champions of p4c based in Hawai’i, distinguishes between “big P Philosophy” and “little p philosophy.” The former (“big P Philosophy”) refers to academic philosophy as a specialization; it is the study and analysis of philosophers and their texts. In this approach, philosophy refers to the ideas and thoughts found in “established” philosophical works, and it is performed through analyzing and evaluating their theories. The latter (“little p philosophy”) focuses on doing philosophy, and considers these ideas in the context of real-world application. By “doing philosophy” here, I mean living the examined life based on questioning one’s beliefs and conditionings, and striving to acquire a deeper understanding of ourselves. This approach is not centered on understanding content, but rather, understanding people. Philosophy in this sense is examining the ways

we make sense of the world and reflecting on our own set of beliefs; it is an active inquiry into ourselves and others. One does not need academic philosophy in order to live the examined, philosophical life; one does, however, need reflective, dialogical, and reasoning skills in order to ask meaningful questions, and not be stuck in a narrow conceptual framework of thinking. P4c is grounded in “little p philosophy.” This is not to say that p4c discussions reject theoretical matters, but rather that the philosophical content poses new ways the community of inquiry can experience and think about the world, making the ideas relevant to their lives and their own philosophical experience. Again, philosophers and texts (“big p Philosophy”) can be brought into the discussions from time-to-time, but they are merely ways to introduce ideas and generate discussion, not the object of study or of memorization. Ultimately, the difference is this: active inquiry starting from and into one’s own life, and inquiry into the ideas of a philosopher, though the two need not be mutually exclusive, but the intricacies of this relationship is beyond the scope of this work.

Philosophical education should develop students’ intelligence and awareness, and give them the skills of how to think (not what to think) so that they can question their assumptions and their worldview, strengthen their reasoning abilities and their awareness, and learn how to communicate and connect with others regardless of their worldview. One might ask whether such skills should wait until college years, or whether they should even be learned at a young age. Though I wish to focus on pre-college philosophy here in this thesis, I will briefly point out that studying philosophy does not make one a philosopher. There are many students, whether in college or otherwise, who have studied philosophy, but have never taken the next step of actually becoming a philosopher. That level of wonderment is something that comes naturally to children. Gareth Matthews, another philosopher who works in the field of p4c, says that children are natural philosophers because of their sense of

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wonderment, but adults generally dissuade children from asking such questions, partly because they have lost that curiosity themselves.\(^\text{12}\) Children—I include high school students when I say this term, but it is not meant in any degrading sense—are in deep wonderment about the world, and have (usually) not yet fixated on any particular standpoint, as they are constantly in the midst of forming their identity.

Many adults, however, typically reach a point where they stop learning, as they either feel as if there are no answers so asking such questions are pointless, or they are know-it-alls; knowledge, left unchecked, fuels one’s ego, and this prevents new learning, open-mindedness, and a heavy resistance to questioning one’s own ideas.

Thus, the kind of philosophy in education advocated for here is not merely “deep thinking” or abstract conversations separate from the lives and experiences of the teachers and students, but is rather rooted in our ontological condition and delving deeper into our human experience. While other areas of philosophy are certainly discussed in these p4c sessions, either directly or indirectly, I suggest that at the root of these is ontology, for all branches of philosophy and disciplines are connected to being and existence in the world. Fields like ethics, language, aesthetics, and epistemology, for example, are all connected with our \textit{being} in the world. Far from being an anthropocentric view, this is merely the idea that the study of ontology (of our being and our way of conducting our minds in the world) grounds all other aspects of life. Our wisdom teachers have maintained that \textit{actualizing} our understanding of ontology leads to an integrated, flourishing life.\(^\text{13}\) In other words, by awakening to a holistic view encompassing self, mind, world, and other, we pave the way to live and encounter others on the ground of compassion, wisdom, the human experience, and interconnectivity.

\(^\text{12}\) “Adults discourage children from asking philosophical questions, first by being patronizing to them and then by directing their inquiring minds toward more ‘useful’ investigations. Most adults aren’t themselves interested in philosophical questions...There is a certain innocence and naivety about many, perhaps most, philosophical questions. This is something that adults, including college students, have to cultivate when the pick up their first book of philosophy. It is something natural to children.” Matthews, G. B. (1980). \textit{Philosophy and the Young Child}. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press), p. 73.

\(^\text{13}\) See Gangadean, \textit{Meditations of Global First Philosophy: Quest for the Missing Grammar of Logos}. 
The dialogue in p4c is not arbitrary conversation; even the “small-talk” serves a vital role in this style. Rather, I posit that this is a form of what Ashok Gangadean calls “deep dialogue.” He explains that “Deep Dialogue is not just talk; it involves a profound transformation of the habits of mind – of the consciousness in which we make our selves, our experience, [and] our worlds. Entering the healing space of deep dialogue shifts our consciousness to a global perspective through the genuine encounter of diverse worldviews – through global dialogue. This global perspective expands our horizons and enables us to see deep patterns across worldviews – east, west, indigenous – that cannot readily be seen from being embedded within a particular worldview or perspective.”\(^{14}\) I shall examine deep dialogue in a later section, but for now, one can think of it as the art, ethics, and literacy of learning to cross worldviews in an unprejudiced, non-objectified manner. Through deep dialogue, we can dilate our minds to encompass multiple perspectives and come to recognize other people as sacred beings and appreciate their worldview. This is not to be misconstrued as giving into a relativist approach where anything goes either. Besides facilitating understanding among different worldviews, dialogue also serves to bring both parties to the awareness that objectifying others and their perspective is a limited way of viewing human beings. That is to say, we don’t merely give up our lens, nor do we fixate on it or cling to it; this allows us to enter a new form of life and understand it purely, without our judgments or projections. In this way, we can bring our insights back into our perspective and adjust it accordingly. We come to transform our mental patterns to a more holistic and profound way of conducting our minds. In this approach, harmony, unity, nonviolence, and peace can arise and flourish.

**The Role of the Educator**

As we shall see here and in the next section, one of the primary building blocks of p4c is that the classroom is a community of inquiry. In this setting, the educator too is a co-inquirer. Rather than leading the class solely through lectures, the teacher steps back to allow the students to engage in

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dialogue with each other. Although the teacher acts as a facilitator of the inquiry, she does not dominate the conversation; nor does she direct the conversation towards one answer.

There are many cases where a teacher’s word tends to become the law and the absolute answer (even unconsciously), and even the teacher can sometimes buy into this illusion as well! When this happens, students aim to seek the approval of the instructor, rather than actually learn the principles of what the teacher is trying to show them. Such an atmosphere leads to divisions not only with others, but within ourselves, and imposes conformity on physical and mental levels. This stops students from being critical and meditative thinkers as well as integrated, holistic beings, which leads to confusion and conflict. As a result, creative students who question the status quo, or who try to think for themselves tend to make themselves targets for criticism and hostility, because they are questioning the illusion of authority.

In philosophical education, a teacher should strive to develop the capacity and awareness of the students to ask the appropriate questions and figure them out for themselves, so they do not have to dependent on teachers to give them an (or the) answer. To do this, the educator must have an awakened intelligence herself if she is to help the students be self-aware. In other words, in order to combat this tendency of taking the teacher’s word to be absolute, the educator should continually examine his own ideas, psychology, and teaching style, so that he does not get stuck in any kind of unconscious dogma or conditionings that influence his open-mindedness and his responsiveness to the students (i.e., question one’s beliefs and philosophize!). Only when the educator has himself overcome fear by reflecting on his

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15 There are many cases of this inside and outside the classroom. To give another example, many times the students will only do what their teacher has taught or demonstrated, and not consider other possibilities and be creative. In his book, *Meditation on Violence*, Rory Miller states: “Be aware that in any classroom or dojo [martial arts] setting, there is a gap between the perceived goal and the real goal. The perceived goal is what you think you are teaching... The real goal, the goal the student strives for never changes: Make the instructor happy... they [students] will try to do what they think you want them to do, even if it is not the most efficient way to survive. This is why when you teach scenarios, the students will not go ‘outside the box’ without specific permission... deep down the goal is to give the instructor what the students think the instructor wants.” Miller, R. K. (2011). *Facing Violence: Preparing for the Unexpected: Ethically, Emotionally, Physically (...and Without Going to Prison)*. (Wolfeboro, N.H: YMAA Publication Center), p. 36.

16 “This habit of turning to another as a guide, as an authority, soon becomes a poison in our system. The moment we depend on another for guidance, we forget our original intention, which was to awaken individual freedom and intelligence. All authority is a hindrance, and it is essential the educator should not become an authority for the student.” Krishnamurti, J. (1981). *Education and the Significance of Life*. (San Francisco: Harper & Row), p. 107.
identity and conditionings can he be prepared to aid students in such a process. It is for this reason that
the p4c approach considers the educator a co-inquirer as opposed to an authoritative knower or a kind of
law-giver who imparts facts. Teachers can learn as much from their students as they do from them. In
terms of philosophical discussion, every person brings something new to the table, and internalizes the
content through their own particular experience; hence, the teacher discovers new ways the
philosophical content is interpreted and lived.

In her essay, “Teaching Pre-College Philosophy: The Cultivation of Philosophical Sensitivity”
Jana Mohr Lone posits that any educator must possess the skill of “philosophical sensitivity” as a pre-
requisite to teaching philosophy. She defines this as “the capacity to engage in identification of and
reflection about the larger questions that underlie most of what we think we understand about the
world.” Philosophical sensitivity is an awareness of the philosophical questions and dilemmas of the
human condition; it is being mindful of the philosophical content of our experiences and engaging with
them. This sensitivity entails not only that we question our conditioned upbringing and beliefs, but also
that our inquiry into the human condition is related to how we live in the world. Only when we cultivate
an awareness of philosophical experiences in everyday life and implement such ideas are we living
philosophy, not merely talking about it. It is imperative that if we are to grow as human beings, as well
as philosophers, that we apply what we are learning. If the teacher possesses this skill, his or her
students will be able to develop the same capacity, which will allow them to question and initiate inquiry
about their experiences in life, especially of their own behavior and thinking.

In “Philosophical Sensitivity,” the author, Jeff Sebo, says that in addition to the skill of
philosophical sensitivity and the creation of a community of inquiry, teachers need to know their
students on a real level. That is, it is imperative that teachers understand each child as an individual
within the community; teachers of this kind recognize that students have different ways of learning,

Israeloff (Eds.), Philosophy and Education: Introducing Philosophy to Young People, (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge
unique worldviews and upbringings, and ways of experiencing the world that differs from others. Meditative reflection allows one to see this diversity, and facilitate the dialogue across these perspectives. Furthermore, teachers must be aware of how their teaching methods affect their students. The way we conduct our lives is a role model for them, and by questioning our own conditioned beliefs and mental patterns, we can show, either implicitly or explicitly, how to be comfortable with uncertainty and self-discovery. One of the crucial remarks of his essay is that “Philosophy is a holistic discipline.”

Indeed, too often do philosophers focus solely on one branch of the discipline without applying their ideas, integrating it with the other fields, or relating it to their own experience, and hence, the need to learn how to cross worlds. As I stated before, none of these branches are independent of one another, and if we wish to do philosophy, it is crucial that we investigate how such ideas relate to each other and to our own lives. He says that “the practice of philosophy involves challenging all of your beliefs and values, and trying to make them coherent not just within, say, ethics, politics, or religion, but across the board.” In this way, we are living the examined life, not just talking about it, and are applying philosophy to the real world. This is exactly what we are trying to convey to our students when we become educators! Sebo says that many people think that the objective of philosophical education is for students to express themselves, but in reality, the aim is to get students to live the examined life of philosophical reflection as applied in the world.

**Laying the Groundwork of p4c: Creating an Environment for Deep Dialogue to Unfold**

At this point, one might ask how p4c sessions differ from a typical classroom setting. There are several key factors that are crucial for p4c to work that will be outlined here in order for the reader to have a better grasp of this style. The foundation of p4c inquiries and deep dialogue are: intellectual safety, a sense of wonderment, the establishment of a community of co-inquirers, “not being in a rush,” and deep listening. Each of these are valuable in their own right, but they are ultimately interwoven and

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19 Ibid., p. 24.
augment each other, and I shall try to suggest ways they are connected to show that they work best when taken together. This work is not intended to be any kind of instructional manual as to the specific details of how the teacher or facilitator creates such an atmosphere, but an examination of the principles themselves. As such, I shall not review technical details of this process, but refer interested readers to Thomas Jackson’s *Gently Socratic Inquiry* for more information on that subject.

While this point is debatable, I contend that perhaps the most important aspect of p4c is intellectual safety. For the participants to learn empathy, compassion, and appreciation of new ways of seeing the world, there must be “a context within which dialogue and inquiry unfold.”20 In an intellectually safe environment, there are no comments that devalue, nullify, or mock another person. Jackson says that “An important detail relevant to intellectual safety is proper acknowledgment of the diversity of views that emerge in the course of various inquiries. Intellectual safety arises, in part, out of acknowledging and celebrating this diversity.”21 The key word here is “celebrate”; in most environments, we are told to “tolerate” diversity, not celebrate it. Tolerance, however, not only implies separation from the other, but that we must, in a negative sense, “deal with it.” “Celebration” on the other hand means that we can truly open up to the lens of the other, and even if we do not accept their worldview for ourselves, we can appreciate it and see its value without juxtaposing it against our own form of life. Criticizing or mocking another person in a negative way suggests that this person and his/her view of the world is lesser than our own. The type of environment required for p4c is one in which we can appreciate that others see the world differently and they are entitled to do so. In this manner, people will grow more comfortable sharing their thoughts, experiences, and opinions without the fear of judgment or criticism from their peers. The facilitator of the inquiry should stress that the information shared in this exploration should never be used against another outside of the class. In creating this kind of context, students will eventually progress in their understanding of the world,

21 Ibid., p. 8.
others, and themselves through deep dialogue. Furthermore, an intellectually safe place diminishes fear and suppression. If students are not in danger of being judged or ridiculed by their classmates, and the teacher is able to cross into different worlds and see the connections, then an environment of fear will be prevented. For Krishnamurti, “there cannot be intelligence as long as there is fear. Fear perverts intelligence and is one of the causes of self-centered action. Discipline may suppress fear but does not eradicate it, and the superficial knowledge which we receive in modern education only further conceals it.” If a space free of fear is created, intelligence and creativity can arise. But how does such an atmosphere come to exist? One way, I would argue, is through a sense of wonderment.

Children are naturally curious about the world, and ask questions even about the most basic things which we consider to be obvious and common sense. Many adults and teachers, however, tend to silence or suppress such curiosity and intelligence, and “by the time children reach 3rd grade, the sense of wonder with which they entered kindergarten - wonder out of which authentic thinking and thus thinking for oneself develops - has begun to diminish.” Thus, it is quite a challenge to rekindle this wonderment once we have already become rigid and conditioned in set patterns of mind. If this sense of wonder and creativity were continually reinforced, however, it could truly lead the community of inquiry to slowly make their way to awakening a meditative and critically reflective mind of interconnectivity, compassion, and dialogue.

Jana Mohr Lone says, “It’s sometimes said that children are ‘natural philosophers.’ Young people are curious about the mysteries of the human experience and about questions such as the nature of identity, the meaning and purpose of being alive, and whether we can know anything at all...[and she goes on to add that] philosophical exploration begins with students’ inclinations to question the meaning

23 Some might make the claim that the principles of intellectual safety, reducing an environment of fear, etc., has nothing philosophical about it, but is all psychological. My response to this is that the very art of philosophy and inquiry depends on being able to question and speak openly, that is, philosophy is inseparable from wonderment, intellectual safety, deep listening, and the other principles discussed. Certainly, some of the ideas discussed here may have a psychological element about them, but the two disciplines need not be mutually exclusive. On a fundamental level though, practicing philosophy requires a safe atmosphere (physically, intellectually, etc.) for questioning, and I can imagine an argument that claims that psychological stability and comfort is also necessary for inquiry.
of such concepts as truth, knowledge, identity, fairness, justice, morality, art, and beauty." This questioning diminishes as they grow older partly because we uphold the idea that certain people are authorities and know the answers, and doubting this illusion of authority puts such students at risk of being ridiculed by the others (and hence, the importance of intellectual safety). In a safe environment, wonderment can flourish, because questioning and doubting are encouraged and are not looked down upon or dismissed. Many times, however, the people who assert themselves as the authority fear being questioned, and feel threatened (consciously or unconsciously) that they will be exposed for what they are, a person with strong opinions and no understanding, just as Socrates did to the sophists. The true voices of children are dismissed as ignorance, and the “authorities” indoctrinate and program them with academic jargon unrelated to their lives or interests.

In a p4c community, the teacher is a facilitator and co-inquirer as opposed to the sole authority who has “the” answer. I believe that the teacher can certainly help guide the class or present ideas that may help them in their inquiry, but he or she can neither overwhelm them with their own ideas, nor should they have an agenda of leading the class to a certain answer or goal. In this setting, no lens is privileged over others, and the voices of the students can arise and be heard. Philosophical dialogues with children require an intellectually safe environment of mindful listening and dialogue where the students and their ideas are respected. This is not the same as saying everyone is right or that we should be oversensitive; critical reflection is imperative in philosophy, but the idea here is that we should train ourselves to engage in deep listening to what the student is really trying to say, and this requires that we step back from our own worldview and beliefs to truly understand their perspective, which is meditative reflection. The Japanese philosopher and founder of the Kyoto School of Zen, Nishida Kitarō, on

26 “Much of what we adults tell children is highly questionable at best and deserves to be challenged. Yet we adults usually turn aside a child’s challenge with an irritated ‘Oh, you know what I mean!’ How intimidating, how unfair, how desensitizing that response of annoyance can be! If we ever stopped to reflect seriously and honestly, it might become clear to us that, often enough, there really wasn’t anything clear that we could be said to have meant.” Matthews, G. B. (1980). Philosophy and the Young Child. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press), p. 21.
expressing his sentiments that his logic has not been seriously considered and has been objectified, said that “A criticism from a different standpoint which does not truly understand what it is criticizing cannot be said to be a true criticism.” Indeed, criticizing another idea or view from one's own lens and without having stepped into that worldview can neither be constructive criticism nor true critical reflection, for it fails to fully understand the view and its context. Furthermore, this commits an injustice and an act of violence (albeit non-physical) on the speaker, for it contests their rational capacities as humans, and implies that their worldview is alien and has nothing to offer us.

In Miranda Fricker’s book, *Testimonial Injustice: Power & the Ethics of Knowing*, she describes a phenomenon known as testimonial injustice. In essence, testimonial injustice is when a speaker is given little to no credibility in discourse because the hearer or community of hearers hold a filter constituted of negative prejudices of certain types of people, identities, or worldviews. This filter not only distorts the hearer’s perceptions of the speaker, but it also warps how the hearer interprets the speaker’s meaning. Testimonial injustice happens when a social group is associated with one or more epistemically undermining traits that influences how we act towards that group (either consciously or unconsciously). This results in discrediting them as knowers, dehumanizing and objectifying them, and compromising their rational faculties as human beings, and this is a deep violation of the ethics of dialogue. When we undermine a person’s status as a knower in this way, we are implicitly suggesting that the speaker has nothing of epistemic value—neither the person’s experiences nor their testimony—that would contribute to the sphere of discourse. Fricker argues that the listener perceives the speaker to have a certain degree of credibility or lack thereof; in her view, perception causes us to objectify and reject another’s testimony. However, in my view, the speaker’s words are processed through this filter (of the ego), which causes the hearer to misinterpret, reflexively reject, or simply deny any authority to the speaker and his/her views. Our way of conducting our minds in the world shapes all aspects of our

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life, including perception. The ego, therefore, is the root source of the patterns of objectification, and shapes our perception to conform to these ideas as such. Without engaging in meditative reflection (i.e., stepping back from one’s own lens), the hearer rejects the other’s credibility and worldview, which is essentially doubting the rational capacities of people with perspectives diverging from one’s own. In denying others’ rationality, we have established that these people and their entire worldview are not functioning within the realm of reason. To do this is to mentally sever them from ourselves and dehumanize them, seeing them only as objects, not as people.28

Testimonial injustice has immense implications in the classroom, for the victim of such an injustice may not only feel that their identity is being compromised, but they may lose confidence in their own communicative abilities as rational agents. Fricker says that epistemic injustice may cause the recipient to “lose confidence in his belief, or in his justification for it, so that he ceases to satisfy the conditions for knowledge…[furthermore, the person] may lose confidence in her general intellectual abilities to such an extent that she is genuinely hindered in her education or other intellectual development.”29 The principles of p4c and deep dialogue, I believe, can combat testimonial injustice, as they entail shifting our frame of mind to understand the other and appreciate the value of different worldviews, and aim for a higher ethics of non-objectification. This allows students’ voices to be heard, and opens a space for a community of intellectual safety to be built. Thus, the principles of p4c, like intellectual safety, and deep dialogue are crucial now that the field of global and cross-cultural discourse is the norm, for they provide a way to inquire into another perspective while simultaneously respecting it and preserving its sanctity.

Students do not tend to recognize their own philosophical capacities and cannot develop confidence in them because of the environment of fear, the likelihood of testimonial injustice, and constraints such as lack of time that are not conducive to inquiry. Thus, one of the principles of p4c is

slowing down and not trying to get to any set destination by a given time. Emphasis on the idea of “we’re not in a rush” allows both the student and the teacher to create the community of inquiry and take their time enveloped in curiosity about the issues being discussed. A useful slogan to convey this principle is this: when one goes fast, the learning process is slow; when one goes slow, the learning process is fast. In doing this, the community can acquire an expanded awareness of the complexity of issues and see the interrelation among various ideas and subjects. The sense of wonderment that fuels p4c is obstructed by the lack of time and the teacher’s pressure on learning certain skills and facts. The reality is that people learn differently and at different speeds, and slowing down the pace allows students to rekindle and be comfortable with their sense of wonderment and curiosity of the world and with themselves. One might argue that this mentality, and even the sessions, would just take time away from more important matters, and would be counter-productive to the kind of intense engagement of material we wish students to cultivate. The evidence, however, disproves such a view. In fact, “What we see in p4c classrooms from kindergarten through twelfth grade is a deeper engagement (or a re-engagement) with schooling fueled by reinvigorating intellectual energy. This happens with teachers and administrators as well. Rather than thinking of meetings as mandatory drudgery, teachers see them as opportunities for reconnecting to what is important in education and as a means of tangibly improving their own practices. Just as p4c students may view themselves as intellectual contributors, a community of p4c teachers’ inquiry is more collaborative and philosophical.”

A fundamental element of deep dialogue, as was suggested previously, is deep listening. Deep listening is not just hearing what another person is saying, but rather, it is the willingness to put our judgments on hold so that we can truly put ourselves in that person’s world to genuinely understand what s/he is saying. Though this requires great practice and effort, this type of breakthrough is possible through p4c sessions and the creation of the community. In encountering other people’s perspectives,

we come to an awareness of how we view the world. The bond created among the members of the community “places much more emphasis on listening, thoughtfulness, silence, care and respect for the thoughts of others.”

Through mindfulness and deep listening, we can have an insight into the perspective of another being.

The Seven Stages of Deep Dialogue

The idea of deep dialogue has been mentioned several times throughout this work, and I shall now elaborate what this refers to in more depth. Deep dialogue can and does, in fact, co-arise with (not necessarily from) the five foundations mentioned previously, though it is not limited to such factors. The p4c methodology is an exemplary model of philosophical education, and that is why I have chosen to study it in this work. I simply wish to note, though, that deep dialogue is not constrained by those factors, nor is it limited to a single teaching style. To engage in deep dialogue, there are certain factors that must be in place, I would argue, but they can be different from some of the ones previously stated.

As one continues with these p4c inquiries, we progress through profound breakthroughs of compassion and understanding. As dialogue between worlds unfolds, we cultivate a sensitivity to the other’s lens, or as Ashok Gangadean calls it, a “lensitivity.” Gangadean proposes seven stages of deep dialogue that blossom, I believe, when the foundations of intellectual safety and community are in place, and we allow ourselves to open up to the other. The first stage is realizing that another person can have, or has, a completely different worldview, and is thinking and acting from an entirely different technology of thought than our own. This awareness is a profound realization of ourselves and that we have been functioning from our individual conditionings and habits of mind. We discover that the other makes meaning using a logic that diverges from our own lens. In other words, their worldview may

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32 I wish to note here that I am examining deep dialogue in the context of the kind of interaction that takes place across worlds, particularly in p4c-like settings. This work, however, does not examine the background and metaphysical foundations of deep dialogue such as the nature of human beings, etc.

have the categories or building blocks of reality in an arrangement that allows their world to make sense, but becomes distorted when filtered through our own perspective, since there is a fundamental distinction in how our worldview organizes its categories. For example, where the worldview of idealism puts God, or perhaps Spirit/Consciousness, as First, the world of materialism holds matter to be fundamental and primary. These perspectives explain the world differently, as they each have a different take as to what is First. Communication between them is not impossible, however; but it requires that each learns the literacy of how the other makes sense. This advancement in awareness is ultimately the first step in being able to set aside this filter of our mind so that we can encounter the other in their sacred space.

In the second stage, we become cognizant that this lens of viewing the world is filtering reality and other perspectives through our own mindset. Where in the first stage, we see that people have different worldviews, in this stage, we come to the startling recognition that our worldview interprets the other's testimony from our own standpoint, rather than understanding the person's lens from their standpoint. We begin to question our identity and try to understand how we can empathize and relate to our peers. We experience a willingness to seek a way to understand how we can translate their worldview into our own, and how to drop our judgements. To cross worlds in such a way requires a certain level of literacy; that is to say, since other worldviews arrange the fundamental categories of reality differently, we need to understand how the other makes sense by considering the possibility of new this arrangement. Furthermore, we must inquire into the laws of making meaning and sense from this perspective.

In the third stage, we take the great leap of trying on this new perspective for ourselves. We explore what reality looks like from this lens, and this is a great step forward in cultivating compassion. Through this act of meditative reflection, we become critically reflective of our identity and the way we

34 The "categories" I allude to here are derived from Aristotle’s Metaphysics. Some examples include: space, time, figure, texture, motion, color, quantity, being, et al.
were previously conducting our minds, now realizing our former ignorance and our violation of the other. We are able to step back and examine our conceptual structure and way of making sense of reality, because we sample an alternate framework of experiencing the world. This third stage allows us to see that the other is a human being with a unique way of being in the world, and not an object. In trying on this new framework of thinking, we notice that the lens of the mind shapes how we interpret experience; the reason we can treat others as humans beings and catch ourselves objectifying them is because we see that our perspective is not absolute, and that the other simply has a different way of living in the world.

In the fourth phase, we return to our own lens with the new awareness of a different perspective of the world. We begin integrating the other’s worldview with our own because we now realize there are different ways of seeing and experiencing the world, and as a result, see ourself in a much deeper way. Integration here should not be interpreted as mixing both views together, but rather, that we see there are alternate ways of constructing meaning in the world. Since these perspectives can be categorically different, there is not a fusion of them in the conventional sense, but rather, we notice that we can shift between the two perspectives, and now have another way of interpreting experience. There comes the recognition that there are many ways one can process reality. After this internal dialogue between worlds, we proceed into stage 5, where we experience a great awakening to the way we are conducting our minds, i.e., a mindfulness of what lens we are using to interpret our life. There is a shift in the manner one relates to the world and sees that many individuals co-arise and flourish in a relational community. It is a deep mindfulness or awareness of our being, and an awareness of which framework we are using to interpret experience.

Following this, one then enters the sixth stage, in which a person transforms his/her interactions with him/herself, others, and the community. The person now feels enriched by diversity and improved by the newfound learning other perspectives can offer. One begins to feel as though there is greater understanding in relationships with others. With this also comes the discovery that many other people
have not quite recognized the multiplicity of worldviews, and instead absolutize and concretize their standpoint. Thus, this stage can also be unsettling in some ways. Furthermore, one begins to see the deeper common ground of human experience where multiplicity and diversity are located. Compassion and understanding are natural products of this stage, for the awareness of this common ground and the training in multiple literacies leads to the insight of our deep connection and authentic relationships with others.

Finally, in the seventh stage, one attains a grand awakening of a globalized consciousness. This holistic moral mind is founded on compassion, where care for oneself involves care for others and the world around us. We bring this new aspect of our being to all areas of our life, now clearly recognizing that perspectives and other people are sacred and rooted in a unified fundamental ground. It becomes clear that the presence of opposing views allows for innumerable possibilities, and this should be cherished. Trying to have people conform to one way of thinking is equivalent to attempting to destroy reality (which I imagine would be very hard to do), as reality is grounded in difference. At the heart of this difference, however, is a unifying ground in which we are all connected.

To make these stages of deep dialogue more relatable and concrete, I shall relate them to Lawrence Kohlberg’s theory of moral development. Kohlberg, a famous psychologist and philosopher, is widely known for his work on moral development, and mapped out three levels of development that delineated six moral stages people can grow into. In the two stages of the first level, called the pre-conventional level, the child operates on a moral scale of reciprocity. He obeys the cultural rules of what defines good and bad actions, and the physical consequences of actions determine their morality. Essentially, the child is operating from his or her conditionings and upbringing regarding right and wrong, and has not yet developed the sense of shame, guilt, or some faculty to reflect on the consequences of the action and how it would affect other people. In the subsequent two stages now in the conventional level, one’s moral standards reflect the expectations they are supposed to uphold in society. One operates on the level of conformity and maintaining the social order. A person at this level
is a law-abiding citizen; what is right and ought to be done is defined and outlined in the laws of one’s place of residence. In the third, or post-conventional (also called the autonomous or principled) level, one functions based on one’s own clearly defined moral codes that can supersede authority. In other words, one begins to question the established ethos of the society, and contemplates the possibility of changing it for the greater good. The phrase “supersede authority” is not a reference to the stereotype of the rebellious teenager, but rather, one recognizes that striving for the highest moral action is not always in sync with the law. Unlike those in stages 3 and 4, people in stages 5 and 6 will (theoretically) perform the most ethical course of action even if the law rules against it. In stage 5, known as “The Social Contract Orientation,” actions are guided by one’s own personal values, and Kohlberg says that “The result is an emphasis on the ‘legal point of view,’ but with an emphasis on the possibility of changing law in terms of rational considerations of social utility.”

In stage 6, called “The Universal Ethical Principle Orientation,” one lives by an ethos of universal ethics, and is driven by compassion and respect for all people. Since there are so few people who actually reach this stage, it was difficult for Kohlberg to study this stage thoroughly. He theorized that such people operate based on a value system that promotes the sanctity of (human) life.

The stages of deep dialogue do not correspond exactly to Kohlberg’s stages, but there is a similar pattern in both models. As one progresses through Kohlberg’s stages, the person becomes increasingly aware that what is “right” or ethical is not always consistent with one’s conditionings or a legal system, and begins to ground one’s morality on compassion for others and promoting their well-being. In Gangadean’s stages of deep dialogue, immersion in another’s worldview separate from one’s own leads to the profound realization that people make sense of the world differently; hence, the person comes to

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36 I do not think Kohlberg’s sixth stage is merely an anthropocentric view that only values human life, but all life. This idea, however, has neither been proven nor tested. Kohlberg developed these stages from his “Heinzberg dilemma” experiment, whereby one had to choose between saving another person, and breaking the law (in this experiment, stealing). Those in stages 5 and 6 would choose to save the person despite the legal consequences. Whether they would value life in general (animals, plants, the earth, etc.) is open to question, but I would argue they do.
see that absolutizing and privileging one’s own lens severs the connection between you and the other, and objectifies those who do not share one’s own values. Moving into the higher levels of deep dialogue, one comes to appreciate the diversity of worlds, and generates compassion for all beings, as the person comes to see that all things are interconnected and are co-arising together. Thus, in my view, a person who is truly at Kohlberg’s sixth stage of moral development can also access the final stage of deep dialogue, as both are centered on a kind of universal compassion and respect for life. The ideal ethical person does not violate other beings in any way, and discrediting and dismissing other worldviews and perspectives is a form of objectification.

Applying this to philosophy in education, it is my belief that we can reach higher stages of ethical, and also ontological, development through the power of deep dialogue. There are many factors that influence one’s progression through Kohlberg’s stages, but there are certainly ways in which stage development can be facilitated. Most people tend to reside at stages 3, 4, and 5, but through philosophical education centered on cultivating compassion, mindfulness, and deep dialogue, younger generations can mature into critically reflective, meditative, and ethical beings with an I-Thou technology of mind. Kohlberg states that “The way to stimulate stage growth is to pose real or hypothetical dilemmas to students in such a way as to arouse disagreement and uncertainty as to what is right. The teacher’s primary role is to present such dilemmas and to ask Socratic questions that arouse student reasoning and focus student listening on one another’s reasons.”

Students in a mindful community of inquiry who are able to engage in such discussions and have deep dialogues on these issues can challenge their patterns of thinking in such a way that allows for deeper critical and meditative reflection. I suggest that in this way, we do not become “tolerant” of other views as Kohlberg asserts, but rather, we come to celebrate and appreciate diversity and difference.

Some people might fear that deep dialogue, meditative reflection, and p4c pave the way to relativism. However, I argue that besides facilitating understanding among different worldviews, dialogue also serves to bring both parties to the awareness that objectifying others and their perspective is a limited way of viewing human beings. In my view then, such dialogue has an ethical end in that it leads to the insight that objectifying others is unjust. For example, if a student were to make racist comments and saw nothing wrong with racism in his worldview, the educator (and the class) can pose dilemmas (as Kohlberg suggests) to the view so as to lead him to realize that such views and comments are degrading and limiting ways of seeing human beings. In this way, we prevent an “anything goes” or relativist approach, and also avoid the “don’t do/say x” scenario, which provides no reasons and opposes the view with no grounding to show why such a view is harmful. So, learning to appreciate and celebrate the diversity of worlds while also understanding that beings are interconnected is necessary for living the ethical life.

P4c creates an environment where students can cultivate their ability to reason and think in a deep way, and such an atmosphere will allow them to learn to compassion by encountering diverse worldviews while working through the stages of deep dialogue. From what has been said here, it might seem that deep dialogue is for people who already have a fully formed worldview and seek to really understand the perspective others, not just filter it through their own lens. One could argue that high school students are still in the midst of forming their worldview, and children are just being enculturated into it, and that it would be absurd to try and show them how to cross worlds when they are just learning their own. The same line of thought, however, can be used to argue for p4c and deep dialogue; that is, it is because students at this age are not yet set in their worldview that the skill of crossing worlds can and should be taught. Nurturing students in an environment of dialogue and crossing worlds will allow them to think in new ways, and give them the skills to avoid absolutizing their lens and objectifying others. As they grow up with this skill and carry it into adulthood, they will ideally promote such views of interconnectivity, respect, and compassion to people of diverse traditions, within their family, and within
the workplace. As more and more generations of students experience and embody this global learning and understanding, aspects of the society lodged in ego-centric and anthropocentric patterns of thought will be recognized as ineffective for peace and global citizenship.

True peace and harmony does not arise from everyone conforming to one way of thinking, but rather, from integrating multiple perspectives and treasuring difference. In the words of Nishida, “The most powerful reality is the one that most thoroughly harmonizes and unifies various contradictions.”

This becomes a possibility when we create the opportunity for people to learn to face multiplicity in a safe, dialogical manner. This is not to be misconstrued as giving into a relativist approach where anything goes either. The telos of dialogue is to lead both interlocutors to a greater understanding of each other’s perspectives in a non-objectified manner, and to promote compassion for other people, leading to an I-Thou relationship with others. Through the inquiries and the environment p4c creates, we can reach a deeper understanding of ourselves and others through dialogue and education, and advance in the evolution towards a global consciousness.

**Tying it All Together: The “So What?” Question**

At this point, it would be wise to examine the implications of what has been illustrated thus far. I have presented an argument as to why philosophical education should be incorporated into school curriculums and the significance of critical and meditative reflection for crossing worlds. Alluding that the traditional pedagogies fall short of what we wish to accomplish in the classroom (particularly for philosophy classes), I turned to the philosophy for children methodology as a model for the kind of school environment conducive for philosophical growth. Through analyzing the role of the educator and the foundations of p4c, we were able to see that such an approach provides a strong foundation for learning and the cultivation of intelligence. To delve further into the nature of the inquiries and interaction in p4c, I introduced Ashok Gangadean’s seven stages of Deep Dialogue, which demonstrates the profundity, depth, and benefit of philosophical discussions and crossing worlds. What does the

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culmination of all of these factors lead to, however? Why, one might ask, is any of this important? It is now time to face the “so what?!” question.

One might interpret such pedagogies as simply being ways to help students think deeper, but dismiss that such methods have any lasting impact or effect on our psyche and way of living in the world. I contest to such a stance, and posit that such styles open the way for students to cultivate an awakened, integral mind, which allows them to prevent being trapped by a narrow ego-identity (i.e., privileging one worldview and objectifying other people and their worldviews) that keeps them trapped in a psychology of fear, objectification, and dualism. Jiddu Krishnamurti argues that education is not successful if it does not help students break free of fear and conditioning, which would lead to an understanding of their ontological condition. He says that “The highest function of education is to bring about an integrated individual who is capable of dealing with life as a whole.”

Certainly, there are many teachers who recognize this, and attempt to restructure their own teaching style and educational philosophy to nurture the principles mentioned here. However, many of the contemporary methods of education are competitive, promote egocentrism, do not encourage independent thinking, and keep students stuck in patterns of violence and objectification that create an environment, and ultimately, a society of fear.

A competitive atmosphere breeds fear and violence, for the very nature of competition requires trying to be superior to others while focusing on ourselves. Only in an environment free of fear, both physical and intellectual, can students engage in inquiry and self-discovery. Competition also promotes a strong sense of egocentrism and self-centeredness, because it teaches students that cooperation and optimizing relationships is irrelevant if one wants to be successful. Philosophical education that gives rise to deep dialogue will allow students to cultivate an awareness of egocentric modes of thought and objectification, and train them in the art and ethics of dialogue in order understand

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others in deeper ways. This leads to the realization that there is a technology of mind that is not ruled or led by egotism, objectification, and violence, and this is what we are striving to awaken in the students.

When we give in to egocentrism, our relationships with others become dysfunctional, and we become discontent and unsatisfied with our lives, for as long as we maintain that material or intellectual success is the highest goal, we inevitably create the fear of failure. Education should cultivate the genuine relationships between individuals, the society, and oneself. To exist in the world is to be a relational being, and relationships can only flourish if we are not obstructed by fear and mistrust. If we can become integral beings through the examination of our ontological condition, we can encounter others on an incredibly deep level, and be responsive in our relationships. Awakening our meditative intelligence is the awareness of our egocentric patterns of living and the predicative existence from which it originates; this very act of awareness is itself a meditation, and through it, we can begin to transcend our ego-self to a holistic and compassionate way of being in the world. P4c and deep dialogue allow us to optimize our relationships with others and the ecology, thereby building larger and larger communities where people can reason, dialogue, and coexist in a mindful way. In this way, we move from an I-It to an I-Thou relationship with others and our ecology; in other words, we make the transition from objectifying, to encountering others in a holistic and non-objectified manner. Where the I-It technology objectifies and distinguishes itself from the Other, the I-Thou is performative, holistic, and flows with the Other.

Opening up the space for mindful dialogue in a community of inquiry leads to new ways of functioning and conducting our minds. Progressive pedagogies in philosophy, such as p4c, and environments where deep dialogue can take place allows students to analyze and move to broader ways of thinking, and it gives them a way to make sense of when adults contradict themselves. Some people might fear that such discussions would lead to students having less confidence in adults’ reasoning, but seeing adults think about issues in a critical manner helps them feel more comfortable with
uncertainty. Moreover, considering the ideas but also questioning the previous generations’ values and conceptual framework is vital to progress and living in a global age. If students in a mindful community of inquiry were to engage in such discussions and have deep dialogues on the issues of our world, and were able to challenge their patterns of thinking in such a way that paves a way to awaken their meditative reason, we could truly begin to address the crises of our age in an innovative way. This would allow people to connect with each other on the common ground of human experience, and unite to face the problems of the human condition. I suggest that in this way, we do not become “tolerant” of other views, but rather, we come to celebrate and appreciate diversity and difference, because at the heart of multiplicity is unity.

Through innovative methods of philosophical education that revolve around mindfulness, compassion, wisdom, inquiry, and self-discovery, we can shift the ways we are living in the world. In his book, *Meditations of Global First Philosophy: Quest for the Missing Grammar of Logos*, Gangadean states that “Through the power of empathy, sympathy, creative imagination, and a deep sense of shared humanity and compassion, we are able to perform the dialogical turn and encounter other people, other worlds, other religions, other cultures, other language, other orientations, and other perspectives and ideologies.” and we awaken to an I-Thou form of life. However, so long as we are trapped by our conditionings, our egocentric patterns of mind, we continue to objectify others and ourselves, and dialogue inevitably falls apart. When we encounter another person with this way of minding, we filter their perspective and worldview through our own lens, and fail to truly grasp what they are trying to share with us. When the speaker is encountered not as a “Thou” but as an object, an “other,” their word and their perspective is dismissed and disregarded. Thus, by paving the way to dialogical forms of education that strive to create an atmosphere of mindfulness and deep inquiry, we can change the very


way we encounter people and the world. Hence, pedagogies like p4c aim to create an intellectually safe environment where real dialogue can take place. Such an environment is conducive to cultivating insight and understanding, where students can celebrate diversity while being united in their efforts to grapple with the physical and existential issues of the human condition. This space can only come about, however, if the educator himself has awakened to his meditative intelligence, and has overcome his fears and conditionings. In doing so, he can then begin to create an atmosphere where students can cultivate their awareness and intelligence, and have confidence in their powers of inquiry. Therefore, if we wish to transform our society and our institutions, we shall have to begin by transforming education. Our children will be the ones who will someday take charge and be in positions of power where they can truly make a difference the world. By holding on to egocentric models of education, we simply perpetuate the systems that do not work. Giving children the opportunity to really cultivate themselves and providing them with a global literacy of how to dialogue mindfully, we contribute to the betterment of humankind and the world, and open the way to a brighter future of interconnectivity.

_The Master said, "The young should be held in high esteem. After all, how do we know that those yet to come will not surpass our contemporaries? It is only when one reaches forty or fifty years of age and yet has done nothing of note that we should withhold our esteem."_ - _The Analects of Confucius, 9.23_