

Thomas E. Jackson

## Primal Wonder<sup>1</sup> – Ursprüngliches Staunen

### **Prolog: Present at Birth**

In retrospect, my first experience with primal wonder was my presence at my son's birth. Very recently emerged, he was lying quietly, comfortably on my wife's chest. The delivery room was comfortably cool, quiet -- an altogether unrushed, welcoming atmosphere all around. His head was turned such that I could clearly see his face with his as yet unopened eyes.

There was no sense whatever of being in a rush. Nature was doing her work. My wife and I were witnessing, watching, as this miracle unfolded. Indeed, time seemed to have disappeared entirely. I then watched as he opened his eyes for the first time. There was a profound sense of awareness present and what I more fully came to realize later, a *profound sense of wonder* in his gaze: wide open, taking in this, whatever it was, that was presenting itself to him for the first time. At this point, beautifully, appropriately, he smiled!

### **The Journey of p4c to Hawai'i**

In 1979 I completed a doctorate in Comparative Philosophy in the Philosophy Department, University of Hawai'i. In 1984 I discovered the extraordinary work of Matthew Lipman, creator of Philosophy for Children (P4C) and in August of 1984 spent three weeks at an international workshop at the IAPC (Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children) at Montclair State College, co-conducted by Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp. The workshop was attended by some 20 academic philosophers from around the world, eager to learn for themselves how to implement this exciting new approach to education that brought the practice of philosophy to the center of schooling.

Returning to Hawai'i in the heyday of the Critical Thinking Movement, I soon found myself offering workshops and working directly in classrooms with elementary

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<sup>1</sup> The expression 'Primal Wonder' is my own, but I owe a great deal of what I have written here to the book of Cornelis Verhoeven: *The Philosophy of Wonder: An Introduction and Incitement to Philosophy*, Macmillan Company, New York, 1972.

teachers and their students on a weekly basis. They were all eager to try out this unusual approach to teaching thinking. From the beginning, figuring out more specifically what the meaning and nature of philosophy that was to be done with children, beginning in preschool, and then, ultimately elementary, middle, high school, then university undergraduates and beyond, was and remains a challenge.

For a number of years we used Matthew Lipman's pioneering, ingenious philosophy infused K-12 curriculum. However, the limitations of that curriculum, especially in the richly diverse, multi-cultural setting of these Hawaiian Islands, became increasingly apparent. In this curriculum and its practice, the model of philosophy was based on the Western philosophical tradition. Lipman skillfully modified this model for use with students K-12, while remaining faithful to Western content and practice.

Matthew Lipman's realization that philosophy was something that could and should be done in schools, and then creating practically *ex nihilo* a curriculum with texts and guides for grades K-12, was itself a 'game changer'. To then create a philosophically robust pedagogical approach for the implementation of these materials, and a support structure to train those interested in implementing this approach, is truly breath-taking in the enormity of the achievement. Its continued growth around the world is clear evidence of the power of his work and influence.

Lipman was always generous and supportive of efforts to spread this work and certainly supportive of variations. These variations were, as he put it, responding to one of the criteria in his insightful analysis of critical thinking, "context sensitivity". It was this context sensitivity in particular that compelled the changes that have become part of p4c Hawai'i. These changes were due to: (1) Limitations of the materials themselves. Here there were two issues: The time consuming demands the proper use of the materials required. It was no easy matter for teachers to move from text to 'Leading Ideas' to the use of the 'Exercises' and 'Discussion Plans' provided in the manuals. This led to the second issue that without sustained in-class weekly support the teachers eventually gave up. (2) Second, the grounding of the content of the materials in the Western Philosophical Tradition. This intent was clear:

"Philosophy for Children is an attempt to reconstruct and present the history of philosophy in such a way that children can appropriate it for themselves so as to reason

well in a self-correcting manner. [...] Philosophy for Children is a method of dialogical reflection coupled with twenty-five hundred years of various views and systems of thought regarding the nature of the universe, the characteristics of the good life, and the cultivation of wisdom.”<sup>2</sup>

Lipman’s approach, his understanding of philosophy, reflected in his novels and in the practice is very much that of the Western philosophical tradition both in content and practice. In terms of *content*, it meant that the answer to the question of whether or not a given session was philosophical or not meant the presence or absence of a reference at least implicitly connected in some way to a recognizable area of Western philosophy (metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, etc.). In terms of *practice*, it was grounded in the Western model of argument: reasons, premises and conclusions, and so on. Lipman’s manuals are replete with exercises and discussion plans meant to assist this process. Many of these exercises and discussion plans are excellent and fruitful sources of inquiry topics. The discussion plans are keyed in to Leading Ideas in the Western tradition present in the novels. In a similar way, exercises are presented to enhance developing skills in reasoning through a deeper understanding of a richer sense of logic, not focused primarily on formal, symbolic logic as is the case in most university philosophy departments. This process begins in *Elfie*, continues in *Pixie* and then in *Harry Stottlemeier’s Discovery*. The curriculum then moves to the application of these skills in *Lisa*, *Mark* and *Sake*.<sup>3</sup> This is brilliant work!

Finally, in the Lipman approach to the ‘Community of Inquiry’, great emphasis falls upon the inquiry part, but much less on the community and its development. The multicultural richness and complexity of Hawai’i includes different views of what is meant by ‘community’ and the norms and protocols appropriate within those various communities. These considerations led to our focus from the beginning on developing physically, emotionally and intellectually safe communities. We present for consideration the following starting point for understanding intellectual safety: “All participants in the

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<sup>2</sup>Introduction in Ann Margaret Sharp and Ronald F. Reed (Hrsg.): *Studies in Philosophy for Children: Harry Stottlemeier’s Discovery*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1992, xiii.

<sup>3</sup> Ann. d. ÜS: Dieses sind die Titel der wichtigsten philosophischen Erzählungen für Kindervon Lipman.

community feel free to ask virtually any question or state any view so long as respect for all community members is honored.”

In today’s world, in schools and out, safety in any of these three senses cannot be taken for granted. Frequently students bring within themselves the prejudice, bias, stereotypes and other divisive attitudes that they have picked up from home and the surrounding environment. Working on developing safety together with the students is a necessary condition for any community to develop fruitful inquiries. It is important to stress, however, that safety does not mean difficult issues and hard differences are avoided. To develop intellectual safety means creating a safe space where these differences can be expressed, examined, and challenged.

My work in Hawai’i has been an immersion in the many ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse classrooms K-12 in Hawai’i. It revealed that intellectual safety should not be taken for granted at any grade level for either the teacher or the students. Many fruitful sessions arise in connection with unpacking together what is meant by intellectual safety, what conditions enhance and what conditions detract from its presence or absence. These initial sessions provide a foundation and reference point for the community in ongoing reflection on how the community is doing, particularly in a session where safety was not present.

This immersion, from the beginning, has been a shared experience, growing and learning with the teachers and their students. We have worked together as co-inquirers, co-facilitators of inquiries that arise directly out of the wonderings and questions of their classroom p4c communities. Intellectual safety provided the context to adjust to the challenges of this new approach to schooling that brings about a fundamental shift in the power relations between teachers and their students. This shift includes who has the power to decide who is to speak and speak next, the freedom for the teacher to move from the center of authority and responsibility for the direction of the lesson and the content of what is to be learned to inquiries where no one knows in advance where the inquiry will lead. Frequently these inquiries arise and develop out of a simple initial question: “What do you wonder about?” These inquiries, starting with their wonderings, from wide-open wonderings to content specific wonderings based on a specific text, directly reveal the

richness of the multicultural backgrounds of the communities that have made Hawai'i their home.

### **Main Features of p4c Hawai'i Inquiry<sup>4</sup>**

Two things in particular are important features of a p4c Hawai'i inquiry. The first is that it makes very possible effort, as noted above, to arise out of the interests of the students and begin where they are in their understanding.

Beginning where the community is in its understanding is particularly challenging when the reality is that most students are not in the same place in their understanding even though the system is built on grade levels that assume each student has picked up the essentials of what is needed for the next grade level. This is made even more complicated by the different languages that children bring to the classroom as their first language. What is especially rewarding is working with teachers at all grade levels who, in spite of these challenges, make this first special thing about p4c inquiry a reality in their classrooms.

The second important thing about p4c Hawai'i inquiry is the idea of *co-inquiry*, which means that *no one*, including the teacher, knows in advance where the inquiry will lead. In the beginning this is one of the more daunting challenges for the teacher and students, especially at higher-grade levels. What kind of a lesson plan can you make if you don't know where you will end up? It requires a different sense of what is meant by 'progress'.

#### *Four Kinds of Progress*

Educators in general are interested in progress. Progress in p4c sessions is a major concern: Specifically, am I, or are we making any progress, both in terms of our community and in terms of our inquiries? Progress in terms of community focuses on the quality of the participation, listening, and the presence of safety. Progress in an inquiry grows out of each individual's self-reflection at the end of a session. Each participant is invited to respond to three different, connected, and equally important kinds of progress.

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<sup>4</sup> The basis for this chapter is Thomas Jackson: The Art and Craft of 'Gently Socratic' Inquiry, in: Arthur L. Costa (Hrsg.), *Developing Minds: A Resource for Teaching Thinking*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, ASCD (Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development), Alexandria, Virginia, 2001.

The first form of progress we call ‘confusion’. This may not sound like progress, but we think it is extremely important to recognize when one is confused, to not be in a rush to make it go away, and to celebrate that you have the courage not to be afraid of the confusion but to see it as an invitation to deeper understanding.

Very often confusion results naturally from an encounter with a question or topic that is in fact quite complex. One just hadn’t realized this before. One of the sad results of being in a rush to cover content, along with the emphasis on standardized tests with single correct answers, is that a person becomes fearful of confusion and complexity because the test is next week. Help! So understanding and acceptance of the importance of confusion as part of the journey to deeper understanding are real marks of progress.

A second form of progress is recognizing new ideas that came up during the inquiry that one hadn’t thought about before. This is one of the many benefits of the intellectually safe community. One gets to hear new and often amazing thoughts and ideas from others in the community. This can, in a way, contribute to one’s confusion, but in a positive way. One now has more to work with in coming to a new understanding.

A third form of progress is when an answer begins to emerge. It may be an answer one already had in mind because one was already familiar with the topic or question. Or it may not be in any way complete but one has an idea of how to move forward within oneself and with others with exploring the question further. Sometimes one realizes that a satisfactory answer for oneself may be a long way off. Now however there is also the courage to accept this openness.

A fourth form of progress, when relevant, is a commitment to take some personal action with respect to some aspect of the topic or question that emerged in the course of the inquiry. This can be internal in, for example, recognizing a previously unrecognized attitude or assumption about another ethnic group and a resolve within oneself to correct this and, in addition, to take--externally-- action that flows from this change of attitude.

It is especially important to remember that these four types of progress most often occur together in various degrees: I may leave with some confusion, but also with several new ideas to consider and even glimpses of an answer. or I might be just mainly confused. I may or may not yet feel ready to make a commitment to take action, needing more clarity, for example.

What we find valuable in this idea of progress is that at the end of a given session there is no expectation of some kind of consensus, although there may be. The more important factor is that it recognizes that when we collectively begin the session, individually we are often in different places in our understanding. Naturally then, at the end of a session, we will each have made progress in our own way rather than by an externally imposed set of criteria.

The following remark relates to an encounter that captured the value for a teacher of accepting this ‘not knowing in advance’: One morning, arriving at a school where we had been doing p4c for a number of months, I was greeted outside the school by one of the teachers who began speaking to me in great earnest. “You know something, Dr. J. We seriously underestimate what our children are capable of. We reduce them to the texts and lessons we teach.” With growing excitement she continued, “When I’m in a p4c inquiry with my students, I feel like I’m on an intellectual avalanche! They’re sometimes way ahead of me in their thinking. She paused for a bit and then said with a smile “And that’s quite alright, isn’t it!” ‘Not knowing in advance’ creates space for such intellectual avalanches from the community.

### *About Wondering*

Over the years of partnering directly with teachers K-6, I would often work with several classes from kindergarten upwards to 6<sup>th</sup> grade. It soon became clear that with very young children, from pre-school to about grade three, the sense of primal wonder is especially strong, imaginative, creative; vibrantly, playfully, joyfully alive. Their wonderings, un-self-consciously infused with their own cultural home backgrounds and experiences, have created a wealth of ideas from which to think more deeply. This diversity represents a rich, otherwise untapped resource of new ideas with which to work in developing their individual, ever-in-process understanding of their individual and diverse collective worlds. They are as yet remarkably non-attached to any one view and hence open to and actively interested in what they are encountering from their classmates.

Sadly, as I, and others, have personally observed, this initial openness and primal wonder becomes increasingly muted as they move through their experiences in schooling

and life. This results too often, as Hannah Arendt observed, in minds filled with “frozen thoughts”.<sup>5</sup>

During these years of working with students, other questions emerged: Are young children in fact doing philosophy? What is meant by ‘doing philosophy’ at a very young age and, by extension, at any age? In effect, the question hinged on ‘What is meant by philosophy?’.

The idea of wonder kept recurring. A breakthrough finally occurred as I reflected on Plato’s statement “Philosophy begins in wonder”. This meant that whatever else philosophy is or might be, philosophy *begins* in *wonder*.<sup>6</sup> This implies then that whatever our age, when our minds move, however fleetingly, into the ‘wonder mode’, we stand at a portal, an entry into the space/place of wonder.

Here I realized that I hadn’t yet encountered a response to the new question that emerged: ‘When does wonder *itself* begin?’ Suddenly I was again vividly revisiting the birth of my son and the recognition that in that setting I had been *present* at the place where wonder begins! It begins at birth (if not before). We are, each of us, *born already* with the essential prerequisite for philosophy: a special wonder, what I now refer to as *primal wonder*.

We are born with this essential quality. but we are also unique. There is no one else in the world like us. With this uniqueness we encounter a world filled with other unique individuals, an intersection enriched by the similarities and differences that make human societal life possible. In this crucible of life an identity will emerge, taking shape in the particularities of the individual culture and historical moment. All of this is familiar. It is the primal wonder with which we begin that is the foundation of all that follows.

At birth primal wonder is ‘pre-cultural’. That is, the rich perceptual world is pre-conceptual in any cultural sense (phenomenologically, there is no need for *epoche*). As it is put in Zen thought, we begin with a “Beginner’s Mind”.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Hannah Arendt: *The Life of the Mind*, Edition Paperback, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers 1978, 170-171.

<sup>6</sup> Plato: *Theaetetus*, 155c-d, tr. Jowett: “SOCRATES: I see, my dear Theaetetus, that Theodorus had a true insight into your nature when he said that you were a philosopher; for wonder is the feeling of a philosopher, and philosophy begins in wonder.”

<sup>7</sup> Shunryu Suzuki: *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind*, Weatherhill 2007.

This 'pre-cultural' base of primal wonder is crucial because at this point within the field of awareness there are many, many possible alternative ways of 'making meaning' of the world we have just entered. These alternatives are the basis of the possibility for rich inter-cultural awareness and understanding. Every entry point into the world is one of an indefinitely large sub-set of possibilities only one of which is necessary for human life to be possible. If my primary language and culture is Chinese, the world that will emerge for me will present a different way of naming and structuring the world than if it were named in English, German, or Hawaiian. If I am born into a family where I encounter two very different languages like Chinese and English, I am already encountering two different systems of naming and ways of understanding. This is a common experience here in Hawai'i. Then also I may have a 'Mom and Dad', or 'Mom and Mom', or a single parent. Inter-cultural awareness is made possible by a tacit knowing in primal wonder that my 'home' culture is not even the only home I could inhabit. I could also dwell in any number of other 'homes'.

It is precisely this range of possible namings that gives primal wonder its power. Primal wonder carries within itself the awareness that what is unfolding is *one* possibility of an indefinitely large number of possibilities. This awareness is especially evident in young children through the fundamental nature of the questions they pose and the persistence with which they seek to understand the answers we give. From their standpoint, these initial, adult explanations are anything but clear. A particularly powerful example of this emerged in an inquiry with a group of 4<sup>th</sup> graders that arose out of the question: "If your parents didn't have children, does that mean you won't have any?" The initial reaction was that this question does not make sense. A different understanding was revealed by one student who answered: "No, it doesn't mean you wouldn't have any children. My parents didn't have any children." Within the Hawaiian tradition of which he was a part, parents were those responsible for your care. Biology was not the determining factor.

It is this combination of limited experience combined with a non-attached openness that gives children's questions an especially challenging power, one reflected in the persistence of their "But why?" and again, "But why?" in response to an adult's efforts to answer their wonderings. It is precisely this awareness of alternatives with the as yet absent concretized commitment to one or another response that makes inter-cultural dialogue not

only possible, but extraordinarily rich in its potential for creating a much more peaceful, compassionate world. Primal wonder as the ground or foundation of philosophy means that philosophy is the foundation, the necessary condition, for the very possibility of intercultural understanding.

### *On Not Being in a Rush*

For the sense of primal wonder to unfold and persist it is essential that one not be in a rush. Indeed, ‘not in a rush...’ is the spirit that inspires, animates and guides the work of p4c Hawai’i. Upon first hearing, ‘We’re not in a rush...’ at workshops, at talks, formal and informal, this opening thought often elicits surprise, an occasional smile, sometimes puzzlement and even discomfort. It is, after all, so completely at odds with the reality of the world we, especially teachers, experience every day.

To be a successful p4c Hawai’i practitioner, facilitator or participant, however, requires embracing a deeply internalized commitment to not being in a rush. Being in a rush precludes the appearance of primal wonder. It precludes being sensitive and open to the questions and interests of the students. Yet not being in a rush is most difficult for the teacher who is under great pressure to cover content deemed important by others often outside the classroom. This pressure continues to increase with no end in sight.

The crushing reality is that in fact we, parents, young adults, administrators, business people, politicians, all of us, including increasingly our children at younger and younger ages, *are* in a rush. We *are* in a rush to get somewhere – to get the kids to school, to soccer practice, to respond to the latest tweet, text, or email, or, in too many cases, simply to survive.

Not openly, readily acknowledged is that in this rush to get somewhere, some very special things, precious, essential to being and becoming fully human are being lost: our sense of primal wonder, the questions that flow from that wonder, the preciousness of life, of each other, the specialness of coming to know ourselves and each other more intimately, and the opportunities to experience richer, more joyful lives.

P4c Hawai’i invites each of us to experience, more systematically, the liberating sense of not being in a rush. Incorporating p4c as an ongoing part not just of a single class period, but systematically woven into the fabric of a school’s culture K-12 brings powerful

changes. It allows us to connect with each other and the deeper rhythms of life that only emerge when things slow down.

Systematically implementing p4c means creating time and space on a regular basis to listen with care, to thoughtfully take in what another has said, to allow an inquiry to unfold with a group of children or adults at a pace dictated not by a clock, but by the integrity of the inquiry itself, sensitive to the energy in the community. When you systematically do this, you will find your life and the life of your school community richer in a deeply satisfying way. This is the heart of p4c Hawai'i 'inquiry time'.

### *Children Doing Philosophy*

The many diverse cultures that make up the peoples of Hawai'i provide an especially rich place to participate in p4c inquiries with children/students K-12. Part of this richness includes the fact that no cultural/ethnic group is in the majority. Diversity of faces is the norm. This diversity is further enriched by the great number of *hapa*, mixed marriages like Thai-Japanese, African American-Japanese, Native Hawaiian-Caucasian, and so on. Far from being a 'Paradise' however, there are a number of complex factors that contribute to layers of stress in the Islands. These include historical, socio-economic and health issues that continue to disproportionately impact the Native Hawaiian population in terms of poor health, higher incarceration rates, and decades of dominance by a white minority.

One important example of documented successful impact of p4c Hawai'i is the curriculum implemented beginning in 2004 by Amber Makaiau and her colleague Kehau Glassco at Kailua High School (KHS) in Waimanalo, East Oahu. Grounded in p4c Hawai'i, the curriculum has these main goals: (1) Understanding of: The history of ethnic groups in the U.S., violence indicators, and ethnic identity of oneself and others; (2) developing skills including: thinking critically and philosophically about ethnic studies concepts, interpersonal communication, and personal reflection; and (3) the increasing of empathy for others, connectedness, empowerment to make positive changes in the community, and

personal responsibility for resolving issues of violence.<sup>8</sup> Three research studies confirmed the impact of this curriculum in achieving these goals.<sup>9</sup>

Another extraordinary recognition of the impact and success of these efforts at KHS was the visit of the Dalai Lama in 2012. The focus of the visit was on Education, and in addition to two public lectures the Dalai Lama had expressed a desire to meet privately with students at a school that had demonstrated success in developing a culture of compassion in the school and the wider community. Of all the schools in the State of Hawai'i, Kailua High School was selected for this honor. The entire student body spent an entire month preparing for this visit. A subset of the questions prepared p4c style by the students was selected. In a very moving session with the entire student body present, each student whose question had been selected presented their question, in turn, to the Dalai Lama for his response. This assembly is etched forever in the memories of those who attended.<sup>10</sup>

This example is just one of many that reveal what happens when p4c is systematically implemented in a school-wide initiative sustained over many years; by beginning in kindergarten, and sustained K-12 as we are now doing in selected schools in Hawai'i. Building on their lived experience of multi-culturality, K-12 students learn from and come to treasure the diversity that is revealed by their p4c inquiry sessions and the wider impact this has on the culture of the school community itself. They realize there are deep differences in who they are socially, culturally, and sexually, etc. Their primal sense of wonder allows them to see these as alternatives that enrich their own growth with new possibilities for each of them. They come to embrace the freedom and responsibility to choose or not as they seek to discover/create an identity-in-process in their own life-long adventure of living an "examined life".

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<sup>8</sup>See Amber S. Makaiau: *Adolescent Identity Exploration in a Multicultural Community Context: An Educator's Approach to Rethinking Psychological Identity Interventions*, Doctoral Dissertation, University of Hawai'i, Manoa, 2010, 92-94.

<sup>9</sup> See D. Rehuher, C.-B. Momohara, J. Sugimoto- Matsuda, E.S. Hishinuma: *Ethnic Studies Course Evaluation, 2007- 2008: Technical Report*, Honolulu, HI: Report to Kailua High School 2010. --- See also: C.-B. Momohara, J. Sugimoto- Matsuda, E.S. Hishinuma, J. Chang: *KailuaHighSchoolEthnicStudiesEvaluation – 'Tattoo Unit': Technical Report*, Honolulu, HI: Report to Kailua High School 2011.

<sup>10</sup> See the video link: <http://p4chawaii.org/gallery/#prettyPhoto/29/> (21.04.2017). See also the newspaper article: <http://www.midweek.com/aloha-dalai-lama/>(21.04.2017).

From these experiences I have come to fully appreciate the wonder that I now experience on a daily basis in doing philosophy together with children. By kindergarten most have acquired increasing facility in their philosophical growth: the acquisition of language. In many parts of the world, children are simultaneously acquiring two or three languages. This gives them the power to voice their primal wonder, their insatiable curiosity, expressed in different languages and to become aware of the differences these languages make.

In a safe environment, children exhibit a *gently* Socratic persistence in their questioning that pushes our adult thinking, our often inadequate, incomplete first attempts to answer their “But why?”.

Children, in their gently Socratic persistence, invite us to revisit, to think yet again for ourselves about some very fundamental question or questions that we haven’t thought about, or gave up thinking about many years ago. This persistence is importantly *gently* Socratic in that a pre-set ‘Socratic Method’ does not inform their persistence. It is open-textured. Their primal wonder is seeking a level of understanding that somehow ‘makes sense’ to *them*. This gently Socratic approach that characterizes p4c Hawai’i is decidedly non-adversarial. It employs philosophical skills such as those in the ‘Good Thinker’s Toolkit’<sup>11</sup> and aims at forms of progress that represent deeper understanding of the topic or question with which the inquiry began.

In this way, children are endeavoring, sometimes playfully, sometimes with great intensity and seriousness, to make sense of their experiences, as we adults continue to endeavor to make sense of *ours*. In this setting children are embarking upon what Socrates referred to as an “examined life” [dt. “geprüftes Leben”; Platon, Apologie 38a].

### *Beginning, Emerging, and Mature p4cHI Communities*

One way I think about p4c Hawai’i, is to think of it, like life itself, as a journey. It’s a journey characterized by learning to think and care more deeply about oneself and others,

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<sup>11</sup>The Toolkit consists of 7 letters, (W, R, A, I, T, E, C), each of which forms a way of taking (wonder) (the inquiry???) to a deeper level, such as “What do you mean when you say...?”, “Please give a Reason”, “What do you Assume?”, “What is the Inference/Implication of this?”, “Is it True that...?”, “Can you give an Example to help me understand?” or, finally a “Who knows a Counterexample?”

about the choices we make, about the person we are becoming and want to become by conscious choice.

P4c Hawai'i focuses on building school communities that are intellectually safe, places where students, teachers, and families can learn what it is like to grow in an atmosphere that is joyful, caring, thoughtful; in a word, mindful.

We find it helpful to think of a p4c Hawai'i community as unfolding in three, overlapping phases: first as a *beginning* community, then, with experience, it develops into an *emerging* community, and finally into a *mature* community. These are not hard and fast stages, since a community can some days function in a very mature way, and other times more like a beginning or emerging one. There is no problem with this. Like life itself, it unfolds with its own rhythms, in its own time.

The teacher/facilitator is absolutely pivotal to the success of a p4c Hawai'i inquiry in each of these stages. In a beginning community it is the teacher/facilitator who introduces the ideas behind such inquiry. She/he is responsible for establishing, monitoring, and maintaining the safety within the group. This will include monitoring the proper use of the community ball and calling on each other and seeing that members have ample opportunity to speak as well as the safety to remain silent. The teacher/facilitator always has the right/responsibility to speak when needed with or without the community ball.

The teacher/facilitator is responsible for introducing such things as the 'magic words'<sup>12</sup> and the Good Thinker's Toolkit letters. Most importantly, it is the teacher/facilitator, especially in the beginning, who sets the time and pacing for the group. 'Not being in a rush' depends on someone sufficiently comfortable with silence and 'wait time' beyond what is typical in most classrooms. It requires a person whose own sense of wonder is still very much alive and who is keenly interested in what the authentic thoughts of the community are on a given topic; one who is comfortable with uncertainty, not eager to push for closure but willing to allow an inquiry to move where 'it' and the community

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<sup>12</sup>cf: Ist Philosophieren mit Kindern Philosophie? , by Marie Eitzinger, VDM Verlaag Dr. Muller Aktiengesellschaft & Co. KG, Saarbrucken, Deutschland, 2008, pgs 23-25.

seem to want to take it. She/he must be willing to risk not knowing the answer; to indeed be a co-inquirer in the quest for an answer.

As the community grows and matures it will move from ‘beginning’ to ‘emerging’, where the other members of the community internalize the protocols, call on each other, listen with greater care to each other, and spontaneously begin to use the toolkit letters, assist in moving the inquiry to a deeper level. Students move from an exclusive participant role to becoming participant/facilitators. Finally, in a ‘mature’ community, the teacher becomes, along-side her students, a co-equal participant/facilitator. You must not be in a rush for it to happen, but it’s definitely worth the wait and it’s deeply satisfying to watch it emerge, at its own pace.

Our model is not that of an expert who comes to work with a novice. P4c Hawai’i offers a different model – one that acknowledges the professional and pedagogical skills of the teacher. The teachers know their students, they know when they are experiencing difficulty in understanding something, and they know how to respond appropriately. Teachers who participate in the p4c circle also help to match the philosophical inquiry approach with the content for which they are responsible. Both, teacher and facilitator learn from each other. The teacher internalizes the craft of the philosopher’s pedagogy; the philosopher/facilitator develops the craft of classroom teaching.

In these years we have worked closely with the State of Hawai’i Department of Education and the University of Hawai’i at Mānoa. Now, with the generous support of the Uehiro Foundation in Japan, we established in 2012 the University of Hawai’i Uehiro Academy for Philosophy and Ethics in Education. The Academy is a partnership between the College of Arts and Humanities and the College of Education.

### **Primal Wonder, *Pohaku* and Rocks –Encounter with the Hawaiian Language Immersion Project**

One series of events in particular that crystallized our growing recognition of the cultural limitations of Lipman’s approach with its grounding in the Western tradition was our work with the Hawai’i Language Immersion Project at Pa’ia Elementary School on Maui. This work at Pa’ia was just a small part of the larger story of the rescue and resurgence of the Hawaiian language from its near extinction. Keiki Kawai’ae was one of the leaders in this

important movement. I met Keiki at a Critical Thinking Conference in Honolulu where I had done a presentation on p4c that already reflected the changes we were making in the Lipman approach. Keiki spoke with me afterwards, saying she was specifically interested in what we were doing, noting its differences from the other critical thinking approaches. She appreciated the emphasis on community, on the circle, on safety, and questions arising from the interests of the community.

What developed from this initial encounter was an exceptionally fruitful relationship where I was able to learn first-hand about the extraordinary richness of the Hawaiian tradition, both its past and the remarkable transformation of its traditional values in response to the often corrosive influences of the contemporary world. All of this resonated deeply with the heart of where p4c Hawai'i was evolving. For example, there are the values expressed in Hawaiian by such words as *aloha*,<sup>13</sup> *'ohana*,<sup>14</sup> *'aina*,<sup>15</sup> *pu'uhonua*,<sup>16</sup> *malama*,<sup>17</sup> *pono*<sup>18</sup> to mention just a few. These ideas came to infuse/inform, give articulate form to our deep commitment in p4c Hawai'i to 'not being in a rush', to creating the 'intellectually safe place (our *pu'uhonua*), to viewing our philosophical activity as grounded in *inquiry*, not argument, and to view our *content* as arising from the interests of the community, highly sensitive to the culture and norms of that community, as well as, in some classroom contexts, discipline specific content such as science, math, language, arts, and social studies.

At one point Keiki pointed out that she had experienced in conference presentations the "argument model" in various approaches to critical thinking as being "culturally intrusive", especially with respect to traditional Hawaiian culture. As one example she indicated that within the Hawaiian tradition there was and continued to be a special recognition of the respect and authority of the *kupuna*, elders. A need was recognized to 'soften' the formality of this respect to allow the young to question an elder, but this needed to be done in a way that maintained respect and would not be helped by the challenge of a

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<sup>13</sup>Rich with many layers of meaning, such as a simple greeting of "welcome" or farewell"; to much, much more.

<sup>14</sup>"Family" in both the narrower biologically related sense, but also more broadly used.

<sup>15</sup>"Land" – *Aloha Aina* means "love of/for the land".

<sup>16</sup>"Safe place, a place of refuge".

<sup>17</sup>"To care for, to protect".

<sup>18</sup>"Just, good, right" – *Na pono o na wahine* means "women's rights".

model of attacking, defending or undermining via some appeal to ‘reason’. This was disruptive of both community and efforts at inquiry.

The weekly sessions in the Hawaiian language classes brought into sharp focus the idea that in p4cHI we are a circle, which must first of all develop itself as a community (not to be taken for granted). This is the foundation that makes possible genuine *co*-inquiries, where each participant feels secure in their own best thinking in the service of themselves and each other, with the shared intention of coming to our own deeper understanding of the topic or question with which we began. Each and every voice is valued for its contribution. It is not a matter of age or status. We are all inquiring together, each *gently Socratic* in our asking for a reason or a clarification, offering a possible counterexample. This was not intended as a challenge in a negative sense, but a potentially helpful move forward to a deeper level of understanding in questions for which no single correct answer was yet available and might, in fact, never be. It entails its own sense of rigor and responsibility of each member of the community to present their thoughts, however tentatively, on the question or topic.

Another transformative part of this experience was working with Keiki as she translated some of the key concepts both of ‘community’ and ‘inquiry’ into Hawaiian. We had extraordinary exchanges as she clarified for me how one would translate the Good Thinker’s Toolkit concepts of ‘assume’, ‘infer’, ‘reasons’, ‘evidence’, and so on into a very different language and cultural setting. There were certainly similarities, but equally revealing nuances and differences built into different ways of thinking about and viewing the world and our relationship with it.

One classroom experience in particular at Pa’ia Elementary School captures much of what all of us learned from the p4cHI-Immersion experience. It involved a session with 4<sup>th</sup> graders, which began with a science lesson, in English, on rocks. It was similar to lessons I remembered from my science lessons long ago that began with distinguishing the different kinds of rocks, igneous, metamorphic, etc. There were other points in the lesson as well. Then a remarkable change occurred. The language switched from English to Hawaiian and instead of ‘stone’, I heard *pohaku*. As was later related to me, the students then discussed together *pohaku* and what they knew about *pohaku*. One characteristic not mentioned in English with regard to rocks, was that *pohaku* possessed *mana* (*spiritual*

*energy, power*). When the students were asked how they knew this, they related, as an example, experiences of searching for *pohaku* with appropriate *mana* for a *hula* performance.

One of the many remarkable things about this and other similar inquiries was that these children were able to move with ease between two very different cultural, conceptual frameworks. For them it was not a matter of either or, but both and. They were able to see that there was value in each framework and no need for claims of exclusivity of one or the other. Indeed their own world was enriched precisely because they felt no need to decide between them but use them as appropriate.

Another particularly important surprise for the teachers of these Immersion p4c sessions was the amazing facility they found in the students with their eagerness and ability to use Hawaiian language to articulate difficult ideas that required a sophistication of language use the teachers had not expected students to be capable of yet. This attempt to use Hawaiian in new, more complicated untried ways and by this pushing the envelope of one's use of a second language by these students has repeatedly appeared in the classes of ELL (English Language Learner) teachers who use the p4cH approach in their classrooms.

### **Epilog: The Overcoming Power of Primal Wonder**

The encounters of p4c Hawai'i with the Hawaiian Language Immersion Schools project was pivotal in my own, still developing understanding of primal wonder. An additional valuable source of understanding the place of primal wonder as a foundation for intercultural understanding has been to view this understanding as requiring a particular kind of 'translation skill', or skills of interpretation. This connection arose directly from the work and insights of Jinmei Yuan. In her dissertation she observes that: "No matter what languages are involved, a translator often faces difficulties caused by the fact that the concepts available in one language do not always match those available in another."<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, "[t]ranslation between English and Chinese involves not only matching two sets of concepts but also understanding the two very different cultures in which these sets of concepts reside. Therefore, the problems of English-Chinese translation are more than

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<sup>19</sup> Jinmei Yuan: *Can Aristotelian Logic be Translated into Chinese: Could there be a Chinese Harry Stottlemeier?*, Saarbrücken: VDM Publishing House Ltd. 2010, p.12

just those caused by moving between ‘logical spaces’,<sup>20</sup> in which logical relations present. For the very logical ‘space’ is itself structured differently by these two cultures.”<sup>21</sup>

Yuan further elaborates that [w]ithout an appreciation of this kind of difference, merely trying to match Chinese concepts with English ones will cause problems. [...] in different language systems, the differently structured ‘logical spaces’ produce not only concepts that fail to match perfectly but also logical relations that fail to match perfectly.”<sup>22</sup>

I maintain that primal wonder is the foundation of this capacity to “negotiate” between “differently structured ‘logical spaces’” or different cultural “systems”. The ‘logical space’ of primal wonder is prior to any given language and hence makes possible translation/interpretation between cultures, especially when “...the concepts available in one language do not always match those available in another”.<sup>23</sup> It is this space of primal wonder that makes possible that the Immersion students move effortlessly between rocks and *Pohaku*, and potentially all of us to move through and with multiple cultural frameworks.

I would also suggest that this pre-linguistic space of primal wonder is the aspect of mind, referred to by Shunryu Suzuki as “Beginner’s Mind”.<sup>24</sup> It is this pre-existing state or condition that makes possible true intercultural understanding. It is the sustaining and growing of this “beginner’s mind”, this primal wonder that is the most basic task of education.

This task, rightly done, would allow us to shake free of the ‘bondage’ that results from an overly constrictive grip of one particular set of concepts that a given culture equips us to initially encounter ‘the’ world, and enable us to properly, rightly (*pono*), compassionately participate in our diverse worlds with the rich varieties of sounds and actions of those around us.

Living in Hawai’i with its rich cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity has provided an especially fruitful context in which to be immersed. Living here has provided insight

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<sup>20</sup>Anm. d. ÜS zu Wittgenstein. ... Wittgenstein, Ludwig 1921, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. tr. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness 1974. Atlantic Highland, New Jersey: Humanities Press International, Inc. 3.032, p. 11

<sup>21</sup>Yuan: *Can Aristotelian Logic be Translated into Chinese?*, p. 12.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.: p. 13

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.: p. 12.

<sup>24</sup> Suzuki: *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind*.

and indications of how a recognition of primal wonder from the beginning of the school experience, with appropriate, conscious intention, can nurture this initial wonder in educationally rich, *wonder-fully* life altering ways.