

Home Grown

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Every living thing on these islands of Hawai`i came from somewhere else. The seeds were transported here in one way or another across vast stretches of ocean. Once here, the seeds grew and developed, adapting to the unfamiliar challenges of their new home. People also came. Pride of place in arrival and thriving in the unique setting of these islands goes to the Native Hawaiians whose way of life continues to nourish the thinking and ways of being of the other, more recent arrivals from elsewhere.

So it is with P4C Hawai`i. It began elsewhere, but it has grown in new and exciting ways—influenced by all that is best about our island home. This volume presents the richness of the living forms that P4C has taken since its arrival in 1978. In this opening essay, I will relate some of the story of those beginnings and what has contributed to the program’s specialness.

P4C began in the late 1960s when Matthew Lipman, while teaching philosophy to undergraduates at Columbia University, made a connection that had not really ever received much thought—the idea that philosophy could be taught, and indeed should be taught, to children. Lipman saw that his students had a lot of passion to change the world but were lacking in their ability to reason soundly and exercise good judgment in how to go about their lives. He also recognized that college was rather late in life to begin efforts to systematically develop reason and good judgment. He wondered if the discipline of philosophy, with its emphasis on clear thinking and sound judgment, if properly reconfigured, might be presented at an earlier age. He realized that philosophy in its current academic form would be unsuitable for children but wondered what would happen if philosophy were presented in a more accessible way, in the form of a novel, perhaps. In the story that he would tell, the readers would discover, in a playful way, the rules of good thinking, while at the same time learning to think together about some of the deep, philosophical questions that have perplexed humans for over two thousand years. He set to work on his manual typewriter and soon had his first novel tapped out. He titled it, *Harry Stottlemeier’s Discovery*,

a play on the name of the philosopher, Aristotle. First, he tried it out on his son’s sixth-grade class, where he was delighted and astounded by how quickly the children were able to see the logical rule presented in the first chapter and how they were able to raise their own questions about other philosophical issues that were skillfully woven into the story.

Following that informal test, experimental trials were held that demonstrated significant gains in reading and math among the students who had engaged in philosophical discussions after reading *Harry Stottlemeier* over the control groups who had not. In the early 1970s Lipman moved to Montclair State College, as Montclair University was then known, where he joined with Ann Margaret Sharp in creating the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC). The IAPC soon attracted international attention. Each year scholars, mainly those connected with academic departments of philosophy, came for a three week workshop conducted by Lipman and Sharp. This workshop experience was an intense immersion in this new way of doing philosophy.

By the early 1980s the IAPC had developed a curriculum (now referred to as the Philosophy for Children or P4C curriculum) that consisted of seven novels with seven accompanying teacher’s manuals. At the same time, there was a strong effort to promote critical thinking in the nation’s schools. In response, the Federal Department of Education established a panel of experts to identify which of the programs that claimed effectiveness in developing critical thinking could actually present research-based evidence in support of their claims. If the data they presented met DOE standards, the program received “national validation”. Such programs then became part of an official list that schools around the country could consult in their own search for an effective approach. Philosophy for Children was one of several programs that received this important validation. National validation also meant that the program was eligible for federal money to support costs associated with the professional development of school faculty who wanted to implement the program.

In 1984 I had just completed a doctorate in comparative philosophy at the University of Hawai‘i. I had also spent three years as a cofounder of the Hawai‘i International Film Festival, and I was seeking work outside a traditional academic career in philosophy. I had, by chance, the singular good fortune to learn about Matthew Lipman and P4C and in August of that year, together with a colleague, Karen Lee, I attended one of those three week workshops at Montclair. It was there that Karen and I experienced first-hand, with colleagues from around the world, the excitement of the Lipman approach—of thinking together in philosophical ways about topics that we chose from passages we had read in one of his novels and, in the process, experiencing the sense of being part of a community of inquiry. The decisive experience for me occurred in the last week when we went to a local school to observe a group of sixth graders engaging in P4C–Lipman style. I could hardly believe my eyes. Students, sitting in a circle, had been reading a passage from *Harry Stottlemeier*, and they were now coming up with their own questions on aspects of the text. Next they selected the question they wanted to talk about and, with the help of a philosopher/facilitator, they began to inquire together into the question they had selected. The students were animated, engaged, and thoughtful. They shared their personal views with each other and began to develop more penetrating insights into the question that they had selected. I had a deep sense of wanting somehow to be able to do this for the rest of my life.

When we returned to Hawai‘i that summer Karen and I found that the critical thinking movement was in full swing in local schools. Hawai‘i educators were looking for ways to implement this new mandate. Soon we found ourselves conducting our first workshops. These workshops mark the beginning of p4c Hawai‘i. Though we achieved some success in our early workshops, we soon found it necessary to modify the Lipman approach. Teachers and students were able to read the texts together and come up with questions, but they were stymied by what to do to keep an inquiry moving once a question had been selected. In an earlier experiment in P4C on the Big Island, Barry Curtis and Nobuko Fukuda at UH Hilo, had revealed similar shortcomings. The Lipman manuals, which had been designed to respond to this difficulty, were, in practice, unwieldy and difficult to use. Our first innovation, one of many over the years that have come to distinguish p4c Hawai‘i from other P4C sites around the world, was to recognize the need for in-class support

for the teacher. It was as a result of this collaboration, of working together with teachers and students, that we came to create what we now describe as an intellectually safe community of inquiry—an innovative setting in which topics that arise out of the interests of the community are pursued in philosophically responsible ways.

In-class support was at first accomplished by the addition to the classroom of a philosopher/facilitator—a person with extensive experience in doing p4c who would join the teacher as a weekly participant in p4c sessions. In the beginning this was either Karen or myself; later, it was provided by UH Philosophy Department graduate students. This innovation was almost magical in its impact. We had not, initially, anticipated the profound effects it would have on the students and the consequences it would have in developing p4c Hawai‘i as a unique expression of Lipman’s P4C.

The regular classroom presence of these facilitators quickly developed into ongoing, creative partnerships among participating teachers, students, and philosopher/facilitators. We realized that the pedagogical skills of the teacher in combination with the philosophical skills of the p4c facilitator were essential in order to engage the children in philosophical inquiry. The partnerships that we formed in these early years have continued to evolve.

Our model is not that of the expert who comes to work with the novice. This would harm our aim of creating an intellectually safe community. p4c Hawai‘i offers a different model—one that acknowledges the 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 learns the craft of classroom teaching.

Karen and I experienced great enthusiasm from teachers in this partnership, and we experienced considerable external pressure to expand p4c to other schools. In spite of this enthusiasm, we discovered that when in-class support at a given school ceased, p4c quickly ceased as well. This is an unfortunate dynamic and part of a larger phenomenon that befalls many reform endeavors in education, including the critical thinking movement. A critical need is recognized;

mandates are issued; quick fixes are sought; programs are developed; schools rush to embrace the reform, or are pressured to comply; experts are brought in; special training sessions are conducted; and in the end the reform is passed over to be replaced by the next one. Sometimes, programs that are narrowly targeted at a specific problem are legitimate “quick fixes”. p4c, however, is not a “quick fix”. p4c aims to create intellectually safe communities that nurture the ability to think for oneself in responsible, respectful ways. This work is transformative and requires sustained, ongoing support in order to bring about deep changes that cannot be accomplished in weekend trainings or through one to three year initiatives.

We worried that we did not yet have the resources to be able to effect lasting change if we cast our net too wide, and we feared p4c could fall victim to the appeal of the next big thing and disappear. So, instead of trying to expand to new schools, we sought schools where the right conditions obtained: a supportive principal with a faculty who would make a long-term commitment to p4c. We would focus on depth, not breadth; on sustained reform, not quick fixes. Fourteen years ago we had the good fortune to be invited to a school with the requisite conditions of a supportive principal (Bonnie Tabor) and equally supportive faculty—Waikīkī Elementary School. For several years prior to our joining them, the faculty and staff at Waikīkī Elementary School had made Art Costa’s Habits of Mind (HOM) an integral part of their school culture. HOM provides a natural, fertile environment for p4c Hawai`i. Like HOM, p4c seeks to create good thinkers, and we soon found that p4c and HOM mutually reinforce each other. Our work together there has created a dynamic synergy among students, faculty, and staff and we have come to understand the impact on children who experience the cumulative effects of HOM and p4c over the long term. The results continue to be extraordinary.

Waikīkī Elementary School is now one of our model schools. We regularly bring visitors—local, national, and international—to these schools to witness in person what schooling can and should be. Our university students visit them to observe, do research, and work with their remarkable staff and students. Our model schools are beehives of creative, caring, innovative energy—vibrant examples of what is possible in public education.

Thirteen years ago p4c made its first appearance at Kailua High School (KHS), which has become our second

model school. KHS is another school where the right conditions have obtained: a supportive principal (Francine Honda) with a faculty who are committed to support p4c for the long term. From the beginning, two teachers in particular at KHS, Amber Makaiau and Chad Miller, have made it possible to overcome what had, to that point, been a seemingly insurmountable obstacle to P4C worldwide—difficulty in gaining traction in teaching P4C beyond the elementary school level.

One of these obstacles is a function of Lipman’s curriculum which requires, in effect, a separate class time for the use of his texts in P4C sessions. So, in spite of the existence of Lipman-authored novels for middle and high school, there is simply no room in the school schedule for implementing his program of study. Related to this is the widespread notion that philosophy is a discipline unto itself with its own content and activities. Understood in this way, philosophy is a subject that is suitable only for adults and an activity best practiced by professors in university departments of philosophy. I refer to this as “Big-P philosophy.” Lipman’s novels represent an effort to break away from Big-P philosophy but our experience with his program, even at the elementary level, revealed that his curriculum did not accomplish this end. In addition, for students in Hawai`i, his curriculum was too limiting with its focus on Western philosophical traditions and culture. These discoveries spurred our efforts to develop p4c Hawai`i.

In tackling this problem at the elementary school level, I developed an approach that I refer to as “little-p philosophy.” The *content* of little-p philosophy is the set of beliefs that we all possess to make sense of the world; the *activity* of little-p philosophizing is the process of reflecting on these beliefs as part of our larger interactions with the world. In important ways the content of little-p philosophy is unique to each of us. It is the result of the particularities of what some philosophers refer to as our “situatedness” in the world and our responses to them. We also differ in the extent to which we are willing to engage in little-p philosophical activity, which is an on-going philosophical reflection on our life. Socrates referred to this as living an examined life. As a result of our efforts in pursuing little-p philosophy in intellectually safe communities, and with the creative input of teachers and students, we have learned more about how to develop discussions that deepen into philosophical inquiries.

The p4c conception of inquiry captures the philosophical part of what happens in our intellectually safe communities.

The little-p / Big-P distinction has made it possible to view philosophy not primarily in terms of some specific content, but as a way of responding to content. Rather than immediately responding to content questions with an answer, little-p philosophical activity invites us first to pause, inquire into, and pose questions of the content itself. This notion of little-p activity has freed philosophy from an over-reliance on Big-P content for its sense of legitimacy by focusing instead on activities that begin with any content or topic, whether personal or public, academic or practical.

An important addition to the concept of little-p philosophy is my development of the Good Thinker's Tool Kit (GTTK). The GTTK is an important response to the concern that teachers express about what makes a question, session, or response philosophical. The Tool Kit captures what I see as essentially Big-P philosophical types of questions. The Tool Kit is composed of seven tools. I use the acronym WRAITEC to describe each of them. Each tool represents a type of philosophical question that can be used individually or in concert with others to take thinking about the initial starting point to a deeper level: What do you mean? What are your reasons? What assumptions are you making? What inferences? Do we know it's true? Can you give examples or counter-examples? Such questions can be posed in any situation or content area.

What teachers like Amber Makaiau and Chad Miller have been able to do at the high school level is to take the possibilities of little-p philosophy, along with the rich notion of the "intellectually safe community", and nurture their growth. They began by doing this in their own classrooms, and they have extended the practice to other classrooms in their departments. Amber and her colleague, Kehau Glassco, developed a nationally recognized ethnic studies curriculum that integrated philosophical content and activity. Their course rests on the four key pillars of p4c Hawai'i: community, inquiry, philosophy, and reflection. The course in ethnic studies/philosophy is now required for all students who graduate from KHS. Amber and Chad have extended the p4c Hawai'i approach in ways that have made it not only the heart of their own teaching at KHS, but also in ways that have been embraced by their colleagues in the social studies and English departments, and among the wider KHS community.

The p4c work at KHS has also been greatly enhanced by the addition, five years ago, of another p4c Hawai'i in-

novation, the Philosopher-in-Residence program. Benjamin Lukey is the current holder of that position. Ben participates in faculty meetings, assists new teachers in implementing what Amber has insightfully named the philosopher's pedagogy, and works with experienced p4c faculty in developing new ideas such as expanding the philosophers' pedagogy to new content areas. The impact and success of their efforts was acknowledged in a dramatic way by the visit to KHS in April 2012 of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama came specifically to meet with the students and respond to the questions they had for him.

The Philosopher-in-Residence position has been a powerful addition to p4c Hawai'i in creating a sustainable infrastructure for meaningful educational transformation. Any long term change, if it is to be transformative, requires the kinds of support that keeps the classroom experiences of the individual teacher in sharp focus. It is then possible to expand out from that base to include other players, individuals as well as institutions, who can give shape to lasting reform.

Over the years, p4c Hawai'i has blossomed and the seeds of these developments have been spread by former students who have carried what they have learned to other elementary, middle, and high school settings. They have also been carried further afield to schools and universities on the US mainland, Europe, China, Mexico, and Japan. Two former students in particular Jinmei Yuan, now at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska, and Mitsuyo Toyoda, now at University of Hyogo, in Himeji, Japan, played decisive roles in the spread of p4c Hawai'i to China and Japan. And so, in recent years, far from disappearing, we have felt ourselves stretched almost to a breaking point, wondering how we can respond to the many requests for help that we have received.

Fortunately, new assistance has arrived for p4c Hawai'i in the person of Noboru Maruyama, a remarkable individual who is Secretary General of the Uehiro Foundation in Japan. I first met Maruyama-san in what I now recognize as a singularly important encounter in the UH Philosophy Department lounge in 2004. In that brief initial conversation, we both realized that we shared a vision of the possibilities of schooling, rightly done, for lasting human change through education. As a result of that meeting, he visited Waikiki School with me and participated in classroom p4c sessions. He talked with teachers and the school principal, Bonnie

Tabor, and he became convinced that something very important was happening at Waikīkī Elementary School. Generous financial support soon came from the Uehiro Foundation, and we began to arrange annual exchanges where Hawai`i teachers visit classrooms in Japan, and Japanese teachers visit classrooms in Hawai`i.

In May 2012 our relationship was further strengthened with a ceremony that featured the signing of a formal agreement between the Uehiro Foundation of Japan and the University of Hawai`i at Mānoa whereby the Uehiro Foundation of Japan pledged \$1,250,000 over the next five years to support the establishment of the University of Hawai`i at Mānoa Uehiro Academy for Philosophy and Ethics in Education. The Academy is part of the College

of Arts and Humanities and is located in its own space in Sakamaki Hall. Through this generous gift from the Uehiro Foundation and their commitment to our shared vision for educational change, we recognize that a whole new era has begun for our goal of preparing, supporting, and sustaining educators, researchers and students who engage or are interested in engaging in p4c worldwide.

In this volume you will meet some of the remarkable people who are part of the p4c Hawai`i story. They represent the people who have played and are continuing to play an important role in the story that I have been relating about the coming of P4C to these islands and its transformation into p4c Hawai`i.
