Philosophy for Children: Challenging Sexual and Gender Essentialism Through Pedagogical Advocacy

by

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Abstract

School-based bullying is a pervasive issue in Canada, resulting in deplorable physical and psychological outcomes for victims, bullies and bystanders. Sexual and gender minority youth—and anyone perceived to embody variant sexual and gender norms—are especially at risk of abuse. I present evidence to suggest that a community of inquiry such as Philosophy for Children (P4C) has potential to improve the situation; P4C works to collapse sexual and gender dualisms and reconstruct gender epistemologies, providing young learners with a space to discover, together, that sexuality and gender are intricate and multivariate by nature and construction. This manuscript presents a multi-perspective theoretical analysis. It is used to frame P4C by drawing on queer, critical and postmodern theorizing to build pedagogy that addresses ethical concerns around the program while buttressing my central hypothesis that P4C, as pedagogical advocacy, can help prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying.

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Introduction & Methodology

Can Philosophy for Children reduce harmful essentialist attitudes toward gender expression among adolescents, thereby reducing bullying behaviour? This is the research question that has propelled my scholarship since I began my master's degree in January 2013. It could be reframed as a hypothesis, for yes, I think Philosophy for Children (P4C) contains this potential, and in fact my intention at the outset was to test its utility using a quasi-experimental study (Mertens, 2010) in secondary schools in Edmonton, Alberta. However, over the course of my degree, my eyes, heart and mind have been opened to a network of theoretical, philosophical and ethical issues that demand exploration before an empirical project can be undertaken. This thesis marks the culmination of that endeavour thus far.

The central problem embodied in this research question remains the same: bullying behaviour among adolescents is a rampant issue in Canada (CCL, 2008; WHO, 2012), resulting in deplorable physical and psychological outcomes for bullies, victims and bystanders (CCL, 2008; CPHO, 2011; Government of Alberta, n.d.). Compounding the problem, direct, school-based anti-bullying initiatives often have little or no effect and can instead drive bullies to find creative ways of abusing students without getting caught (CCL, 2008). And lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-identified, two-spirited, queer or questioning, and gender nonconforming (LGBT2Q/GN) youth, henceforth referred to as sexual and gender minority (SGM) or queer youth, are particularly at risk (CPHO, 2011; Russell, Ryan, Toomey, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2011; Taylor & Peter, with Associates, 2011). As a countermeasure, there is evidence to suggest that a community of inquiry such as P4C has potential to help prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying (Bleazby, 2007), thanks in part to its emphasis on the cultivation of critical, caring and creative thinking (Lipman, 1995) and empathy (Schertz, 2007).

Founded by Matthew Lipman in the 1980s, Philosophy for Children is a widespread movement that aims to teach reasoning and critical thinking skills to children and youth, with age-appropriate programming designed for students in grades one to twelve (P4CA, n.d.a). Lipman (1995) outlines P4C as a narrative- and discussion-based *doing* of philosophy that promotes higher order thinking by enabling students to become critical, creative and caring thinkers. According to Lipman, the improvement of critical thinking involves buttressing children's logical and epistemological capacities and evaluative skills; critical thinking, then, is conducive to judgment, sensitive to context, and self-corrective. Creative thinking embodies perceptual thinking as a form of discovery; it is expressive and involves "a thrust towards self-transcendent originality, towards going beyond, in some fashion, what it has been, so as not to repeat itself" (p. 65). Finally, caring thinking can be trifurcated into the *active* kind—embodied in our conduct—the *affective* kind—"a conception that cuts like a razor across the reason vs. emotion dichotomy" (p. 67)—and the *valuative* kind, thoughts which are distinguishable from judgments and are valuations *of* something:

> One is *appreciative,* typically, of beautiful things, *respectful* of rational beings, *admiring* of virtuous beings, *considerate* of sentient beings, *compassionate* toward suffering beings, *benevolent* toward beings in need, and so on. One of the things a robust approach to moral education might attempt to do is to teach students these connections as well as in what ways the one actively requires the other. Unless one can experience the forcefulness of these relationships, one is likely to have difficulty recognizing that there are moral obligations at all. (p. 68, emphasis in original)

I wrote a paper for my grade 10 social studies class that defended marriage equality for same-sex couples. My teacher was so impressed by the essay that he asked me, in private, if he

could read it to the class. Out of fear of backlash and questions about my sexuality, I refused. However, had a diffuse, egalitarian community of inquiry—premised on queer, critical, postmodern tenets—been established in that classroom, it may have provided me and other students a safe space to vocalize our progressive, contentious opinions and judgments in an emergent, dialogical fashion, without the didactic spotlight proposed by my teacher when he asked to read my entire essay to the class. In 2002, at my conservative high school in the heart of Alberta's Bible belt, with no overt protections or visibility for SGM students, a community of inquiry such as P4C might have been the only way a closeted gay student like me could have felt comfortable suggesting among other students that queer people should have the same rights as everyone else.

While I see immense potential in P4C to promote prosocial dialogue in youth, it is ostensibly a modernist endeavour rooted in Western epistemology and rationalism. Accordingly, ethical concerns have been raised around such a project, particularly from critical and cultural theorists and postmodernists (Gregory, 2011), protestations I engage with in Chapters 4 and 5. In Chapter 4, through a postfoundational framework, I develop P4C as a model of queer, critical pedagogy, borrowing especially from the work of Freire (2004), Pendleton Jiménez (2009) and Ryan, Patraw and Bednar (2013). In Chapter 5 I outline my interpretation of postmodernism and its implications for research in education, and I argue that P4C can engender postmodernist pedagogy as well. This leads into Chapter 6, where I tackle what I call the *holography of the universal*— its normative gravity in tension with its structural self-annihilation—captured well by the postmodernist emancipatory mantra *we cannot and yet we must.* The holographic universal riddles any prescriptive policy recommendation—in this case, that P4C be adopted as a pedagogical tool across Canada—with self-contradiction. Chapter 7 entails a "rational

deconstruction of rationality" and the cautious revival of reason as an indispensible construct, a crucial step of my project to reanimate the limbs of P4C when postmodernism threatens to sever its spine. The danger of practical paralysis portended by the paradox of universalism is addressed in Chapter 8, which weaves Jacques Derrida's *aporia* of justice, Simon Critchley's *supreme fiction,* and Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze's *breach in tongue* to galvanize cultural transformation in the face of immobilization and to strategically apprehend the holographic universal and critical ethics.

As outlined below in my methodology, I have acquired a postmodernist posture over the course of my master's degree, and this manuscript mimics that metamorphosis by delaying engagement with postmodern ethics until Section II, even as the whole of this document, in its form and style, effectively encapsulates postmodernism. Section I begins with a review of the statistics around bullying in Canada, explores the connection between gender expression and sexuality that premised my early research, and discusses the link between gender essentialism and bullying. Chapter 2 is built around the postpositivist framework that motivated this study from the outset (Mertens, 2010). It includes a review of experimental studies around P4C, highlights extant research lacunas and emphasizes the methodological challenges around conducting empirical research on P4C. Chapter 3 revolves around queer theory, characterizing gender as confusion and farce, and charting the mobility of queer from identity to subjectivity to a tentatively subjectless project, and back again, while resisting the call to reconceptualize queer as "after-queer." Anticipating Chapter 4 on P4C and critical pedagogy, and borrowing from Sherry Wolf's (2009) neo-Marxist analysis of queer politics, Chapter 3 also highlights the intersectionality of queer studies as a constellation of subjectivities, including not just sexuality and gender, but race, ability, class, age and more.

Taking Judith Butler's (2009) *Frames of War* as an exquisite example—"the normative production of ontology ... produces the epistemological problem of apprehending a life, and this in turn gives rise to the ethical problem of what it is to acknowledge or, indeed, to guard against injury and violence" (p. 3)—I perceive ontology, epistemology and ethics as inextricably interwoven facets of critical praxis. Though the scope of this document is limited primarily to epistemology and ethics, I have found it useful at times to touch on ontology, particularly in my discussion of critical thinking, consciousness-raising and Freirean just ire. As the practical culmination of onto-epistemological pursuits, and as the linchpin of any sound pedagogy, ethics is a theme that pervades this thesis, including an ethics of care (Pendleton Jiménez, 2009), ethics of negative freedom (Airton, 2013), critical research ethics (Adams St. Pierre, 2011), and ethics of choice (Friere, 2004). As well as a nexus of ontology, epistemology and ethics, this manuscript sees queerness as "both an intellectual and practical project aimed at inclusive praxis" (Grace & Hill, 2009, p. 25). Accordingly, this work aspires to speak to a wide audience, from teachers, to teacher-educators, to policy makers, to philosophers of education, and anyone outside or in between. While I think it incumbent upon all educational researchers to grapple with mind-bending philosophical issues in order to conduct themselves professionally and personally with ethical rigor and logical consistency, I acknowledge that not everyone has an appreciation or a knack for abstraction. Accordingly, it is my sincere hope that every reader is able to take something practically useful from this publication and that it may stimulate novel perspectives that contribute to exciting new modes of being-in-the-world.

Methodology

Colombian philosopher Diego Antonio Pineda (2009, p. 320) identifies "being reasonable" as one of life's primary mandates, which is to say that it is necessary we give, ask

for and evaluate reasons for many different things, such as defending an opinion, theory or action (pp. 322-323). Further on he posits criteria for the constitution of a *good reason:* "1. A good reason either *explains* why something happens or *justifies* that something be done or had to be done. . . . 2. A good reason is *timely*. . . . 3. A good reason is *a sign of responsibility and prudence*. . . . 4. A good reason is *coherent*" (pp. 327-328, emphasis in original). A good reason, he claims, must also be logically acceptable, convincing and sensitive to context (pp. 331-332). Similarly, Dutch-Canadian scholar Claudia Ruitenberg (2007) purports that a fear of moral absolutism in school classrooms leads students "to espouse relativism when they should be promoting pluralism" (p. 56), the latter being the perspective that "there is more than one set of values that is legitimate and worth pursuing, but not an infinite number" (p. 56). Ruitenberg is adamant that a pluralistic conversation must meet certain criteria, "perhaps most importantly that the interlocutors understand the difference between preferences and judgments, that they provide reasons for their judgments, and that all judgments and reasons are open to interrogation by others" (p. 56).

Disparate cultural and educational contexts notwithstanding, Pineda (2009) and Ruitenberg (2007) converge on a coherent directive around the importance of responsible judgments and prudent justifications, one that eschews the normative free-for-all of relativism. Where Ruitenberg's instructiveness exceeds Pineda's, I think, is in her emphasis on conversation and the implication that reason-giving is always dialogical. Even in a monologue or monograph, good-reason-giving strives to anticipate others' perspectives and responses, all the while acknowledging that "we cannot see around our own corner" (Nietzsche, 1887/2001, p. 166). Pineda's essay has a particular fecundity, though, in its peripheral focus—Philosophy for Children (P4C)—which is the central topic of this thesis. According to Pineda, reasonableness is

one of the imperatives of a community of inquiry such as P4C; his criteria for good reasons, then, saturate P4C, shaping the latter into a normative microcosm of meaning-making for the "real world."

Matthew Schertz (2007), who argues for the usefulness of P4C in cultivating empathy, provides a succinct description of how P4C operates, which I quote at length:

> Community of Inquiry is a dialogical, inquiry-based pedagogy utilised within the Philosophy for Children program to enable students to engage in philosophical discourse whereby they ask questions and deliberate concepts. Students sit in a circle facing one another while the teacher presents a stimulus, usually a narrative with philosophical themes, which encourages them to ask questions and provides a gateway for theoretical exploration. Once a question is chosen, the teacher acts as a facilitator who models various skills of inquiry during the discussion, such as problematising a position, asking for clarification or providing counterexamples. Although the teacher guides the session, students determine the subject of inquiry and directly address one another within the dialogical process. (p. 192)

In the pages below, I weave the intellectual journey of my master's degree into the form of the thesis itself. Put another way, this thesis will read as the growth of an idea, an idea that began as a problem statement and hypothesis at the beginning of my degree in January 2013, and one that has wriggled its way into its present form as this document, a comprehensive policy recommendation that will, in part, satisfy the requirements of my Master of Education degree. That P4C, my master's degree, and my master's thesis are in some ways isomorphic—each built around an increasingly dialogical, self-reflective exploration of a particular question of social significance—should provide this policy recommendation with a particular sense of inertia. In

fact, it is my hope that by the final pages of this manuscript, readers will be convinced that the reasons I posit for adopting P4C Canada-wide are very good indeed.

In addition to reflexive, dialectical inquiry around a central question, the methodology of this thesis derives from Margaret Somerville's (2007) *postmodern emergence*, Janet Newbury's (2011) *theoretical inconsistency* and Daniel Warner's (2004) *queer research methodology.* Borrowing the words of one of her colleagues, Somerville describes emergence as "becoming-researcher" (p. 230), and, in a metacognitive stream of present tense, she illustrates the unfolding of postmodern emergence and becoming-researcher in her own work:

> An idea begins to emerge in which an epistemology of postmodern emergence conceptualizes research as an assemblage of representations, each element of which is a pause in an iterative and cyclical process of representation, engagement and reflection. In this conceptualization, time is disrupted and circular and the linear determinism of causation is seen in relationship to other modes of becoming. A strategy of writing as assemblage using multiple forms is suggested as a means to enact this circular time of coming into being. (p. 241)

The circular disruption of time and coming into being is captured in this thesis through the incorporation of nascent, even misguided, ideas from my first semester of master's coursework and through the narration of their rupture and rebirth in and through a journey of emergence. In fact, my central hypothesis from January 2013 remains unchanged, though its positioning and orientation has been significantly transformed as I view it today through a postmodernist lens of qualification, incredulity and suspicion.

Newbury (2011) boldly asserts that "theoretical *in*consistency may in fact be *consistent* with a postmodern orientation to inquiry" (p. 339, emphasis hers). Given that we as researchers

are polyvocal in our orientations and influences, she writes, we may "from one moment to the next, unwittingly experience our theoretical leanings shift beneath us" (pp. 342-343). She argues that inviting multiple, even conflicting, perspectives in our work best facilitates concrete changes in the social world:

> If I can strive to understand how that which I am advocating through my research can be supported through multiple theoretical lenses, then perhaps the gulf between us may in fact be lessened. While we may not come to adopt each other's "theories" as complete packages, we may come to see that the differences between us do not extend to every aspect of life and work. (p. 340)

By exploring the harmonies and discords within and between various schools of thought—queer theory, critical pedagogy, postmodernism and post-positivism—and by blurring the boundaries between them, I endeavour with this thesis to simulate the egalitarian, dialogical inquiry inherent to P4C. Of course, all but the most polemical scholarly work espouses a sort of point-counterpoint-rebuttal methodology, yet traditionally such work takes as its conclusion a singular position, often entailing a subscription to one particular theory. Newbury agrees, claiming that in qualitative research "there remains an underlying norm of singularity in the expectation that the key to a coherent study is theoretical consistency" (p. 337). My methodology embraces theoretical dislocations as a matter of course.

Maarten Simons and Jan Masschelein (2006) proffer a radical new cartography of the learning society, challenging us to resist the comfort of a position and to leverage that as a new point of departure for education:

> Transgressing our actuality or present, transgressing who we are and what we should be like is entering the world of experience and education. And in order to do so, we believe

> that it is necessary to leave behind our intellectual, pedagogical and academic comfort.... This comfort is about having a 'position', a particular position. (p. 426)

With this thesis I seek to exemplify the "ex-posed" social creature of Simons and Masschelein, a critical learner embodying a new epistemological cartography, leading out into a space of rupture and wonderment. One can anticipate objections to this sort of dispossessed mapping; to commit to no position might seem nihilistic or spineless, while espousing multiple positions may appear, at best, fickle, and at worst, schizophrenic. Besides, the irony of "taking a position of no position" is not lost on me. Nevertheless, as I will explicate in later chapters, I take the (ex-) position that to tread in the tensions of a constellation of vantage points is more fruitful—and ethical—than to adopt a monolithic perspective or position.

Theoretical inconsistency and problematizing the referent (in this case, the latter being positionality) is consistent with Warner's (2004) queer research methodology:

> Innovative social scientists should continue to experiment and explore what methods and knowledge are necessary to help us understand ourselves and our oppressions. This is why, in truth, there can be no one queer research methodology, but many methodologies. There is no one truth for sexual identity and sexuality, so it follows that there is no one method by which to generate answers on such topics. (p. 334)

Not only does a queer methodology endorse methodological pluralism—and by extension, theoretical pluralism—but it encourages a blending of categories and illuminates how such categories—e.g., critical pedagogy, queer theory, postmodernism and empiricism—flow in and out of one another. It essentially eschews essentialism, and here we are confronted with more than mere word play. Queer methodology represents a tangible paradox that we must necessarily apprehend and carry as educators and policy-makers.

I have grouped the aforementioned theoretical categories together, though I would grant that postmodernism is more abstract, more a metatheoretical or philosophical lens through which to engage with critical pedagogy, queer theory and science. It should be clear, then, that this manuscript does not choose between post-positivism, critical theory and philosophy, as it is premised on their inextricability. I proceed in the spirit of Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre (2011), who writes of critical research ethics:

> I am convinced that the study of philosophy should precede the study of research methodology so that, for example, the typical social science researcher would understand the epistemological and ontological assumptions that structure positivist, interpretive, critical, postmodern, and other methodologies in the social sciences. Attempts to disentangle science and philosophy are always dangerous. (pp. 613-614)

I contend that where good science meets good philosophy, we find postmodernism. And postmodernism, the tenets and applications of which I will clarify in later chapters, serves as a "state of mind, a critical, self-referential posture and style" (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 2), which I seek to embody as author of this thesis.

Section I

Chapter 1 - Bullying

On October 6, 1998, college student Matthew Shepard was befriended at a bar by two men in Laramie, Wyoming. Promising him a ride home, the men instead drove Matthew to a remote area where they mercilessly beat and tortured him before tying him to a fence and leaving him to die, alone and in agony—which he did. Twelve years later, in Greensburg, Indiana, high school freshman Billy Lucas was found dead by his mother, hanging by his neck from the rafters in his grandmother's barn. Billy had been ruthlessly bullied at school by his peers, who on the day of his death allegedly told him to go kill himself—which he did. In the same month, Asher Brown, Raymond Chase, Seth Walsh, and Tyler Clementi, all teenagers, took their own lives after enduring bullying as well. A year later, Ottawa teenager Jamie Hubley committed suicide after years of torture at the hands of his peers. "This hurts too much," he wrote in his suicide note posted on Tumblr. "I hit rock-fucking bottom, fell through a crack, now I'm stuck" (as cited by Grace, 2013, pp. 132-133). What do each of these young men have in common? They were gay, or at least perceived that way by their schoolmates.

The deaths of Matthew, Tyler, Seth, Raymond, Billy, Asher, and Jamie are tragic, but they are only a microcosm of the devastation incurred by victims and perpetrators of bullying across North America. In 2007 Canada had the 9th highest rate of bullying among 13-year-olds on an international scale of 35 countries, and 47% of Canadian parents reported they had a child who had been bullied, nearly a third of whom had been harassed frequently (CCL, 2008). Canada had the 9th highest rate of self-reported bullying victimization out of 38 countries in 2009 as well (WHO, 2012). These figures represent thousands of human beings, each of whom is 1.7 to 7.5 times more likely to report experiencing depression, withdrawal, learning deficits, panic attacks, insomnia, nightmares, and physical symptoms, such as headaches and stomach aches, than his or

her non-bullied peers (CCL, 2008; Government of Alberta, n.d.). Compounding the problem, a recent systematic review has shown that even direct, school-based anti-bullying initiatives often have little or no effect and can instead drive youth to find creative ways of abusing others without getting caught (CCL, 2008).

Bullying can be defined as repetitive, aggressive behaviour toward someone with less physical or social power, with intent to harm (CCL, 2008). Craig and Pepler (2007) further conceptualize bullying as a destructive relationship problem. Power differentials are consolidated as those who bully learn how to use power and aggression to manipulate others, while those who are victimized become increasingly powerless and defenceless. Often this power is harnessed by exploiting another's vulnerability, like ethnicity, body type, sexual orientation or gender expression (p. 86). Mishna, Newman, Daley and Solomon (2009) similarly refer to bullying motivated by intolerance toward another's membership in a particular group, whether actual or merely perceived, as *bias-based bullying,* which they assert both reflects and proliferates a toxic environment for sexual minorities (p. 1607).

Indeed, we know that sexual and gender minority (SGM) youth are particularly at risk of bullying. A recent national survey of Canadian high school students found that 74% of trans (T) students, 55% of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) students and 26% of straight-identified students reported being verbally harassed about their gender expression (Taylor & Peter, with Associates, 2011). In addition, 37% of youth with LGBTQ parents reported being verbally harassed about the sexual orientation of their parents, and these youth were also more likely to be harassed about their own perceived or actual sexual orientation or gender identity (Taylor & Peter, with Associates, 2011). Another Canadian study found that 69% of trans youth and 45% of LGB youth disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, "I feel like a real part of my

school," compared to only 25% of their non-LGBTQ peers (CPHO, 2011, p. 31). And worse yet, sexual minority youth in British Columbia were found to be 2 to 5 times more likely to report having considered suicide than their heterosexual peers (CPHO, p. 38). Perhaps unsurprisingly, there is strong evidence that reducing LGBTQ-related school victimization will bring about significant long-term health benefits and mitigate health deficits for sexual minorities (Russell et al., 2011).

In 2007, shortly after I came out as gay at the car dealership where I worked in southern Alberta, a straight co-worker found a most peculiar way to congratulate me. He proclaimed that he was happy to be my friend, and that my revelation would not affect our working relationship, because, while I was gay, I was "not a *fag*." I had long been exposed to religiously-derived moral prohibitions, confusions about plumbing and pragmatics (e.g., "which of you is the woman?"), HIV-related health concerns, and other sex-related prejudices against homosexuality, but this was the first time I had encountered the idea that some gay men might be fags and others not. My acquaintance's potential approval or disavowal of my sexual orientation was not related to my behind-the-scenes sexual behaviours but to my everyday gender expression; I was reasonably "masculine," passed as straight, and therefore I was tolerated.

Research demonstrates that heteronormative appraisals of gender expression like those of my former co-worker are behind a great deal of homophobic and transphobic abuse in youth. Emma Renold (2007) found that, while in children and adolescents homosexual behaviour and identification are unlikely to be observed, peers are prone to notice gender nonconforming behaviour and form homophobic appraisals. Further, as indicated above, the results of Taylor, Peter and associates' (2011) national climate survey on homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in Canadian schools shows that over a quarter of straight-identified students are harassed about

their gender expression. Another study suggests that the majority of students who experience anti-gay harassment actually identify as heterosexual (as cited in Saewyc, Konishi, Rose, & Homma, 2014), and Grey, Robinson, Coleman and Bockting (2013) found in a systematic review of instruments that measure homophobia in adults that respondents "who had more traditional concepts of gender roles and who held more sexist beliefs were more likely to have a high score on the instruments measuring homophobia" (p. 347). Gender essentialism will be explored further through the lens of queer theory in Chapter 3, but here I wish to highlight the insight of clinical practitioner David Schwartz, whose words have given thrust to my research vector since the beginning of my master's degree:

> None would dispute that, while the reasons for the hatred of same-sex eroticism and same-sex pairing are multiple, it is the transgression of gender norms by gay men and lesbians, especially the perceived elevation of the feminine by gay men, and of the female body by lesbians, that most disturbs the ruling culture. (2012, p. 476)

Ryan, Patraw and Bednar's (2013) study models a pedagogical approach for encouraging appreciation of transgenderism and gender diversity in elementary students. I draw on their study extensively in my discussion of critical pedagogy and P4C in Chapter 4, but their appraisal of the link between gender essentialism and bullying behaviour fits well here, too. Their article

> acknowledges that children's school lives are heavily shaped by gender; that restrictive notions of gender lead to bullying and abuse of those who fall outside the norms; that a more complex conception of gender and more inclusive teaching practices, especially at the elementary school level, could be effective interventions in children's gendered assumptions; and that this work has been successful in helping students question

> conceptions of gender through literature, particularly over time and through a variety of activities. (p. 88)

In a similar vein, García and Slesaransky-Poe (2010) argue "that children feel the need to police the gender expressions of their peers, and that educators and other adults in children's lives not only witness, but tacitly and overtly promote this kind of assault and aggression" (p. 245). Companionably, Craig and Pepler (2007) claim that "children and youth need help to understand that bullying is wrong, *develop respect and empathy for others*, and learn how to get along with and support others. Effective bullying prevention and intervention activities for children and youth enable them to *develop the skills* essential for healthy relationships" (p. 88, emphasis mine). The connection between gender essentialism and bullying, as well as the theoretical impetus for interventions that acknowledge the ways in which dialogue, empathy and critical thinking are constellated, is what led me to consider P4C as a potential anti-bullying intervention around gender norms and to begin developing a method of assessing its utility in this regard. Accordingly, the following chapter is empirical in scope; it reviews existing research and research gaps around P4C, outlines my proposed quasi-experimental study and illuminates some potential methodological and analytical complications surrounding empirical research of this nature (prior even to delving into postmodern ethical dilemmas).

Chapter 2 – Empiricism & Methodological Considerations

The ABCs of Behaviour

During my doctoral studies I intend to conduct a quasi-experimental study using pre/post surveys to measure the effect of P4C on adolescents' attitudes toward gender expression. As outlined below, Trickey and Topping (2004) highlight the challenges of conducting empirical research on P4C in an educational setting without excessive contamination of confounding variables. Mertens (2010) reassures us that "quasi-experimental designs maintain much of the rigor of experimental designs, but allow for the use of intact groups in conditions" (p. 149), and yet, even if sufficient methodological rigor is somehow achieved, there is still the question of whether or not attitudes actually predict behaviour. The literature on attitude-behaviour consistency (ABC) is mixed. A review by Crano and Prislin (2006) shows that strong versus weak attitudes are more predictive of behaviour and less sensitive to behavioural feedback. Their review also reveals that, generally, the more closely attitudes are interwoven with the self, the more likely they are to promote attitude-consistent actions. Additionally, they discuss how assessment plays a role, since explicit, deliberate measures of attitudes, such as questionnaires, may provide different results of ABC than implicit measures assessing automatic, impulsive evaluations. Finally, the review demonstrates that stronger ABC may be found in participants exposed to attitude-congruent (as opposed to -incongruent) in-group norms, particularly when participants strongly identify with the group.

It would seem, then, that context is key. Graham, Sirard, and Neumark-Sztainer (2011) found that adolescents' attitudes toward exercise predicted physical activity, regardless of baseline, five and ten years later, while de Leeuw, Engels, Vermulst, and Scholte (2008) found that smoking behaviour among adolescents predominantly shaped their attitudes toward

smoking, not vice versa, concluding that focusing on smoking attitudes probably is not enough to prevent youth from smoking. Boulton, Lloyd, Down, and Marx (2012) conducted a study on undergraduates that moderately supports the hypothesis that attitudes predict bullying behaviour, while Andreou, Didaskalou, and Vlachou (2008) found that a curriculum-based anti-bullying intervention program in primary schools produced positive short-term outcomes surrounding students' attitudes toward bullies and victims and actual rates of intervening behaviour, but that these outcomes were not sustained in the long-term.

Review of Empirical P4C Literature

To date there have been a limited number of empirical studies conducted on the P4C program. A systematic review of outcomes of P4C undertaken by Trickey and Topping in 2004 found only ten controlled studies deemed worthy of presentation; many others were rejected due to the contamination of confounding variables. My proposed empirical methodology is quasi-experimental (Mertens, 2010), and thus I will bear in mind the standards employed by Trickey and Topping in the hopes of making it into their next review. While the authors acknowledge that many of the ten studies included in the review suffered from incomprehensive reporting—sparse information on such pieces as selection and matching, statistical tools, teacher training and support, measurement instruments, and observational procedures—and thus were of questionable validity and reliability, they argue that these studies nonetheless provide the clearest illustration of the measurable positive outcomes of the P4C community of inquiry.

The studies promoted in the review demonstrated improvements in P4C participants compared to controls in logical reasoning, reading comprehension, math skills, self-esteem, listening skills, language expression, creative thinking, cognition and emotional intelligence (see Trickey & Topping, 2004, for a complete bibliographical breakdown). These outcomes represent

an assortment of age groups and countries of study and the authors conclude that "a wide range of evidence has been reported that, given certain conditions, children can gain significantly in measurable terms both academically and socially through this type of interactive process" (p. 375). In addition, a qualitative study by Josephine Russell (2002) found that P4C encouraged a sense of confidence and equality and led to increased student participation, particularly in children with learning difficulties:

> Children who were reticent in the early stages contributed freely as time went on. In the community of inquiry they challenged each other in a non-combative way, allowing the other the right of reply.... [With P4C,] prejudices can be confronted and the latent goodwill and empathy of the children can be accessed and nurtured. This is unlikely to happen in the combative and aggressive form of engagement known as debating which is encouraged among older children where the emphasis is not on tolerance and respect for difference but on defeating an opponent. (p. 151)

Plus, Topping and Trickey (2013), while acknowledging significant methodological challenges to their empirical study, found that P4C program implementation was associated with "(i) increased use of open-ended questions by the teacher; (ii) increased participation of pupils in classroom discussion, and (iii) increased rational underpinning for pupil judgments, of both the position of others and their own position" (p.77).

My review uncovered a dearth of P4C-outcome-related studies pertaining to attitudes and behaviours toward gender and sexuality. The one study I found that examined students' self-reported incidents of bullying (both as perpetrators and as victims) appeared well controlled, with purposive sampling of students from a school with a universal P4C curriculum—students who had been participating in the P4C program for their entire school life, which was up to six

years for some—matched from a pool of students from non-P4C schools in the same state in Australia (Tangen & Campbell, 2010). They were matched by gender, age, mother's and father's highest level of education, internet access and cellular phone ownership. Bewilderingly, students at the P4C school reported significantly *more* incidents of face-to-face bullying than matched students at the other schools. The authors posit three possible explanations: the P4C students' enhanced awareness of social relationships could have made them more aware of bullying incidents, leading to a higher rate of reported occurrences; the learning of problem-solving skills from storybooks in the P4C curriculum may lack the authenticity to translate to students' own lives; and/or students need to be explicitly taught about bullying and not rely exclusively on general thinking skills. No matter the explanation, the results are rather perplexing and, one would hope, anomalous; indeed, the authors assert that "there is little research as to the P4C approach on preventing bullying in school; more research into this important area is warranted" (p. 230).

Other Methodological Considerations

The negative results of Tangen and Campbell's (2010) study reiterate the need for more research around P4C and bullying while also underscoring the methodological challenges to empirical studies in schools presented by Trickey and Topping (2004). Saewyc et al. (2014), in their examination of school-based strategies to reduce suicidality in Western Canada, observe many challenges to assessing the effectiveness of such strategies but nonetheless argue for their necessity. They claim that

> given the correlational nature of most cross-sectional studies, researchers are limited in their ability to infer directionality or causality, while studies that use convenience samples limit researchers' ability to generalize more widely. Research is needed that can

> help address some of these further questions about the effectiveness of specific interventions to address the higher risk of suicidality among sexual minority youth. (p. 94)

They also point to shortcomings in their own study that could have been addressed using a pre/post methodology such as the one I have proposed:

> Likewise, this is still a primarily cross-sectional study, in that students were only assessed at one point in time, albeit with recent discrimination and suicidal behaviours, and the timing of the GSAs and policies in schools. In contrast, examining school climate and youth suicidality *before and after a policy or program was implemented*, perhaps by using successive waves of data from population surveys, *would offer stronger evidence that interventions were having the desired effects.* (p. 100, emphasis mine)

A pragmatic mixed methods approach may help further circumvent some of the obstacles to rigorous quantitative inquiry, with less emphasis on objective truth and more focus on the difference it makes to believe or act one way or another (Mertens, 2010, p. 37). Similar to the P4C community of inquiry, the pragmatic paradigm treats intersubjectivity as a key facet of social existence, and early pragmatists such as John Dewey and William James emphasized an ethics of care (Mertens, p. 36), which provides much of the normative thrust behind my call for the widespread incorporation of P4C in Canadian schools. Mixed methods would allow for the questionable-if-indispensible quest for objectivity, as facilitated by a nonequivalent control group design and pre/post survey distribution, combined with more subjective, contextual, culturally illuminating methods of inquiry such as interviews and focus groups.

A comprehensive critical interrogation of empirical methodologies will be necessary before embarking on a primary research project around P4C in schools. This exploration will be

permeated with postmodernist incredulity (Yilmaz, 2010) and an apprehension of the holography of the universal built into all normative pursuits, the central tenets of which will be delineated in Section II. But first, Chapter 3 involves a foray into queer theory—claims about the radical contingency of gender and the dangers of gender policing; challenges to the pre-sexual, pre-subjectivity often assumed of children; a reconceptualization of queerness and the queer subject; and an intersectional, neo-Marxist queer politics—which segues into Chapter 4 and critical pedagogy.

Chapter 3 – Queer Theory

> Consider this: of all the men you interact with on a daily basis, how many of their penises have you ever really inspected for biological authenticity?... In practice, judgements of gender identity are based on public performances, not private parts.
> (Daniel Warner, 2004, p. 324)

> Achieving a passable approximation of normative masculinity requires cultivating a surprising amount of compliance in relation to the norm; passivity and docility turn out to be positively masculine attributes, whereas the work of letting one's queer gender express its phenomenological life requires a bravery and an amount of resistance more often attributed to normative masculinity.
> (Gayle Salamon, 2009, p. 380)

Gender Born? Gender Made

This chapter begins under the premise that gender is a complex, slippery social construction. On the one hand, gender norms really do exist, eliciting approval from "critics"—i.e., those observing at the moment (Warner, 2004, p. 323)—when we successfully conform to these norms, and even adulation when we exceed them by squeezing into some sort of ironic individuality (e.g., the hypermasculine jock who proudly wears a tight-fitting pink t-shirt—I knew a few such "unique conformers" in my high school). These norms become even more pronounced when they are ruptured in often ambiguous acts of transgression, such as the eight-year-old girl who was sent home from her Christian school in Virginia for playing sports, wearing sneakers and having cropped hair— in short, for acting like a boy (Saul, 2014).

And yet, gender is hyper-mimetic, smoke and mirrors, "a complexity whose totality is permanently deferred, never fully what it is at any given juncture in time" (Butler, 1990, p. 22). It has no tangible referent, for it is a mime of a mime of a mime, *ad infinitum.* Even sex provides no stable foundation for genderization, for "how do we know that there are two biological sexes, upon which the 'cultural construction' of gender is built, if all we have access to are the

constructs? Why do we seek out two sexes, unless we already have in mind what we are looking for? In short, ideas of gender *precede* ideas of sex" (Warner, 2004, p. 322; see also Laqueur, 1990). Andrew Samuels claims that, in some sense, men are who they are because of internalization, "a kind of psychological rather than biological 'inheritance' referring to the way men take in (internalize) images of manliness they see projected by the outside world and make them part of their inner world" (2001, p. 37). Further capturing the cultural heritability and structural tensions of gender, Gayle Salamon (2009) notes that

> modern discourse depends on the presupposition that boys must be masculine. This discourse is at once ontological and normative, asserting both that boys are naturally masculine and that they need to *become* masculine, a paradoxical imperative that may account for the ways in which the discourse is haunted by anxiety about the location, durability, and persistence of masculinity. (p. 378, italics in original)

Samuels, a Jungian psychoanalyst, argues that gender confusion—often seen as pathological—is a healthy part of the human condition and that the trouble is in fact the gender certainty that precipitates anxiety and shame:

> Many people who come for therapy are manifestly confused about their gender identity. They know how a man or a woman is *supposed* to behave; but they are not sure that, given what they know about their internal lives, a person who is really a man or a woman could possibly feel or fantasize what they are feeling and fantasizing. (2001, p. 39)

Samuels looks to children for insights on gender, suggesting that they often celebrate gender confusion and that this "may be a more effective, interesting and radical way to enter gender politics than either the suspiciousness and judgmentalism of the therapist or the nostalgia-fuelled return to certainty... Gender confusion unsettles all the main alternatives on offer" (p. 43). A

child's embrace of gender confusion fuels Warner's conception of queerness, which he says is "not about living outside of the regulatory apparatus of the matrix of intelligibility, for there is no proper existence on the outside.... Instead, queerness mocks these barriers" (2004, p. 325).

Gender, then, as a matrix of intelligibility, is pure projection. Mirage. Spectacle. Farce. And yet the consequences of disavowing the charade or working to reinterpret or reinscribe the domains of gender intelligibility can be devastating. According to Butler (2004), some transgressions, particularly egregious "cross-gendered" behaviour, can render one unintelligible, ungrievable, less than human:

> The desire to kill someone, or killing someone, for not conforming to the gender norm by which a person is "supposed" to live suggests that life itself requires a set of sheltering norms, and that to be outside it, to live outside it, is to court death. The person who threatens violence proceeds from the anxious and rigid belief that a sense of world and a sense of self will be radically undermined if such a being, uncategorizable, is permitted to live within the social world.... This is not far removed from the threat of death, or the murder itself, of transsexuals in various countries, and of gay men who read as "feminine" or gay women who read as "masculine." These crimes are not always immediately recognized as criminal acts. (p. 34)

Likewise, Ruitenberg (2010) claims that having a coherent, intelligible gender is a prerequisite for being apprehended as a human subject. Gender, she claims, is seen as a self-evident, binary construct and "one of the most important axes ordering social relations" (p. 621).

While these and numerous other scholars proclaim the radically contingent nature of gender and decry gender essentialism, not all of them dream necessarily of the abolishment of gender like I do. Instead (or perhaps in anticipation), acknowledging and promoting a gender

continuum, and one that is agnostic to genitalia, seems like a propitious project. Demonstrating the commensurability of queer theory and their own critical feminist approach, García and Slesaransky-Poe (2010) posit:

> If we conceptualize gender as organic, and as *both and neither* male and female, then we see multiple possibilities that are all natural and healthy. Simply put, there are *infinite ways* of being a boy or a girl and these ways change over time and space. (p. 249, emphasis mine)

Both and neither? Infinite? This sounds like something of a dismantling of gender after all. Channeling a Butlerean conception of genderization, the authors describe a "gender closet" circumscribed by "cultural mythologies" that not only determine the constitution of gender but also normalize its public expression (p. 248). Whether the cultural transformation I/we envisage involves merely deconstructing the gender closet or actually succeeds in dissolving gender altogether, the need for transformation is undeniable. The potential ramifications for school children who ostensibly dwell outside of the binary (e.g., "gender queer"), who adhere to it in a way that does not conform to a medically normative coincidence of assigned sex and gender (e.g., "transgender"), or who exhibit momentary or prolonged deviations from acceptable gender norms (i.e., "everyone") were delineated in Chapter 1 and can include harassment, marginalization and self-destruction.

The Wise Child

Despite the risks, Samuels (2001) advocates a "new deal" for men and women, one that leaves behind the pervasive, stifling male deal that both manifests in, and is continuously challenged by, children:

> In the male deal, the little boy ... strikes a bargain with the social world in which he lives. If he will turn away from soft things, feminine things, maternal things, from the world of play wherein failure does not matter, then the world will reward his gender certainty by giving him all the goodies in its possession—all the women he can eat. In return for the gift of political power, he promises to be a good provider and to keep unruly and subversive women and children in their place. He also promises not to deviate from this function by loving other men too much (that is, becoming gay). (p. 44)

The *new* deal is quite simple, he says. Gender politics might undergo a positive transformation if we only were to embrace "a celebration of not knowing too well who we are in terms of gender, not knowing too well what we are supposed to know very well indeed" (p. 41). The new deal engenders gender confusion, a theory of which was taught to Samuels by his own daughter and son when they were seven and eight years old, respectively. His children identified four equal gender categories—girl-girl, girl-boy, boy-boy and boy-girl—which are influenced but not dictated by anatomy. "So my daughter could refer to herself as a girl-girl or a girl-boy while my son oscillated between being a boy-girl and a girl-boy. Context was important—it depended on whom they were with" (pp. 42-43).

Like Samuels, clinician David Schwartz (2012) firmly asserts the gender-wisdom of children. If we listen deeply to them, he claims, we will find that "their engagement with gender, especially when it is transgressive or countercultural, may reveal a creativity and even a politics that can contribute to the erosion (if not destabilization) of the gender system as it presently operates" (p. 478). Mindy Blaise (2010) found that children as young as three or four are knowledgeable about gender and (hetero)sexuality and are eager to talk about it. However, "children's insights about gender/sexuality are often missed because adults construct them as

naïve or allow their own knowledge of gender/sexuality, rather than children's, to dominate the landscape" (p. 4). She suggests that educators must consider our responsibility to open up curricular spaces for children's knowledge about gender and sexuality to be heard and valued (p. 1). And yet, even if we begin to correct the *epistemic injustice* committed against children when we disavow their ability to think, know and teach (Murris, 2013) about gender, the penetration of sexuality into gender—"although gender and sexuality are not synonyms, sexuality is an important and unalienable part of gender norms" (Ruitenberg, 2010, p. 621)—creates considerable anxiety for many parents and educators. This anxiety erupts, too, when queer is positioned as a sexual identity rather than a political orientation that challenges the distribution of sensible genders, sexualities and subjects, the former leading to "both the rejection of queerness in the supposedly asexual place of schools and the silencing of queerness as political subjectivity by relegating it back to its 'natural function' of sexuality" (p. 624). Karleen Pendleton Jiménez (2009), too, observes that "teachers continue to confuse and equate queer pedagogy with talking about sex" (p. 176).

Lee Airton (2013) sees a similar problem with adult perceptions of sexualized identity labels in school children:

> I will stress that while there is something to be said about the agency of children to identify as inter alia gay, we can imagine the trepidation with which unrelated adults would declare their belief in—let alone support of—a "gay child's" gayness given that "gay children" directly transgress the hallowed principle of children's asexuality... (p. 536)

However, Airton's primary concern is not with optics—far from it. Instead, their (the gender-neutral pronoun Airton prefers) apprehension is around stifling excess and possibility: "When

there are ‘gay children’ there could be the death of metaphors with which children play and imagine themselves in relation to others, stalling the steady march toward adulthood when things are supposed to solidify. We risk closing a door on queerness” (p. 547).

To Identify As Queer Or With Queerness

Queer studies and its associated political movements have long sought to disrupt processes of normalization, including the homosexual/heterosexual and male/female binaries, and operate on an anti-identity premise (Talburt, 2007). But prudent queer theorists like Airton (2013) and Warner (2004) do not deny the reality and qualified utility of identity categories. Warner concedes that *of course* homosexuals, men, women, and so on do exist but he wonders “what kind of life is lived in these categories, and can we ever change to something more liberatory and equitable? These are queer questions” (p. 324). Matthew Eichler (2010, p. 91) seems to concur, claiming that these identity categories can be useful but often fail to capture the multiplicity of human experience. Furthermore, in a brilliant Rancièrean analysis of queer politics, Ruitenberg (2010) highlights the pitfalls of privileging identity:

> The crucial distinction between identity and subjectivity, as Rancière uses the terms, is that subjectivity questions the apparent naturalness of the rank and order implied in identities. The (in Western societies) now fairly commonplace term “gay” or even the more clinical “homosexual” *can* in certain contexts be used as simply descriptive of one’s own or someone else’s sexual desires and activities, without challenging the homosexual/heterosexual binary or assumptions about stable and unambiguous sex and gender, and sex-gender congruity. (p. 622)

Counteridentities such as gay and lesbian, she claims, are not inherently bad, but they are inadequate if “the political objective is to shift the distribution of the sensible” (p. 623).

Likewise, Grace and Hill (2009) assert that "queer does not mean gaining a seat at the table in a performance that merely exchanges privileges, but instead it demands an altogether new table arrangement" (p. 36). The stakes in this redistribution are very high—queer teachers' and students' abilities to "gain visibility, audibility, and sayability as *queer and equal*" (Ruitenberg, p. 621)—and as I argue below, they are inseparable from the struggles of other oppressed groups, particularly as queers often experience multiple oppressions through intersecting subjectivities of, for example, woman, person of colour and the 99% .[1]

Taking, perhaps, Rancièrean politics to the extreme, Airton (2013) seeks to move school-based anti-homophobia interventions beyond identity, and even beyond the subject, into a "subjectless project." Airton argues that the focus on queer subjects as victims of homophobia, rather than naturalized, systemic, structural matrices that harm everyone—what Kelly Rae Kraemer (2007) calls *cultural violence*—

> endangers "queer people" by holding them hostage to the pedagogical "de-homophobing" of "straight people" that many anti-homophobia educational projects must believe in to exist.... The necessity of particular people as the subjects and objects of homophobia is in some ways indistinguishable from a societal reluctance to extend the presumed reach of homophobic harm to *everyone*. (p. 544, italics theirs)

Airton wishes to see queerness rather than queer individuals as the beneficiaries of anti-homophobia interventions. To privilege queerness is purportedly to welcome excess and possibility "in any and all durations and textures" (p. 548), and Airton ushers in a moment

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[1] A colloquialism coined during the Occupy Wall Street movement that alludes to the economic inequality in the United States and elsewhere.

of appreciable levity with the suggestion that queerness might instantiate as a prom queen without a Facebook profile (gasp!) or a textbook-handsome, peerless gym jock whose girlfriend is neither pretty nor popular in the conventional sense.

Anticipating Airton's (2013) radical conception of queerness, Pendleton Jiménez (2009) writes that queering education "is an expectation of the unexpected, and the use of time to search for paths to return and respond with more knowledge and empathy" (p. 174). In the same vein, Airton asserts that queerness is not separate from sexuality, but neither are they isomorphic:

> I define queerness as the possibilities and excesses of sexuality, where sexuality is the unstructured flow of desire that tends to organize and become identifiable as *sexualities* through relationships, the forms of which are contextually determined. Under this rubric, it is not enough to say that "queerness equals nonheterosexuality" or that they are the same thing, because their equation assumes that queerness shares a common form with heterosexuality and only differs in content. (pp. 540-541, italics in original)

I find Pendleton Jiménez's and Airton's overlapping conceptions of queerness compelling, avant-garde and laden with transformative potential. They endeavour to destabilize queerness itself, lending meta-coherence to prescriptive flux and incessant de-centring. Susan Talburt alleges that "a lot of queer things could be happening in programs and classes that might look disciplined and normalized. Conversely, some rather un-queer things could be happening in places that name themselves queer" (2007, p. 99). Indeed, I think it would be quite un-queer to summarily reject the fertility of any one of identity politics, intersubjective models for anti-homophobia, or queer as a subjectless project, even when each strategy may seem to conflict with the others. I insist that each tactic has its time and place, and besides, the discrete categorizations denoted by the "comma-or" in the previous sentence contradict the fluidic tenets

of queer theory from the start. Instead, I perceive these quasi-discrete strategies as occupying a continuum of radicalism, with Airton's call for the calculated (and no doubt ephemeral) dissolution of the subject being the most experimental—and potentially the most fruitful—critical praxis. Hinting at their own frustration with the inefficacy of extant anti-homophobia strategies, Airton speculates that

> the removal of the queer as the beneficiary of anti-homophobia education is certainly an exceptional suggestion in many quarters, and imagining a subjectless project *as even germane to homophobia* may be quite difficult. [But] what loss does this difficulty portend for those of us intimately invested in schools freer from homophobia? (p. 525, emphasis in original)

It is my contention—expounded in Chapters 4 and 5—that as critical, postmodern pedagogy, Philosophy for Children (P4C) may manifest any and all of the above political strategies, and that this openness to and "expectation of the unexpected," with an emphasis on knowledge-building and empathy, is queerness in action. This contention marks a return to theoretical inconsistency and ex-position outlined in the introduction; I endorse an openness to multiple—and in some ways incommensurable—theoretical positionalities, depending on an as-yet-unspecified, even unspecifiable, array of pedagogical circumstances. And yet, tensions and contradictions notwithstanding, these strategic positions, I insist, all reside under the queer umbrella.

Giving Up the Ghost: White Privilege and After-Queer

Some scholars contend that queer studies has become (or has always been) racist, normalized, regulatory, neoliberal and impotent, and thus they have sought to imagine or constitute an *after-queer* theory or politics. Vicki Crowley and Mary Lou Rasmussen (2010)

endorse multiple positionalities—as I have above—in understanding queer research, particularly when attempting to understand how sexuality is constituted or repudiated in Indigenous cultures (p. 17). They seem to be calling for an infusion of postcolonialism and critical race theory into queer theory, which aligns with other scholars' accusations that queer theory is too often saturated with Whiteness. For instance, Sandeep Bakshi, in a dialogue among Aiello, Bakshi, Bilge, Kahaleole Hall, Johnston, Pérez, and Chávez (2013), contends that "diasporic queerness, indigenous queerness, feminist queerness, and queerness of color are just such severally differentiated ways of being that must co-exist if queer has to progress further as a radical movement" (p. 102). Even more pointedly, and elsewhere citing real-world examples of racist queer politics, Jennifer Petzen (2012) writes:

> A more promising vision of a queer politics committed to social justice would have anti-racist attached to its political practice, not just its name. It is not enough to claim a critical positionality. Allies must have a commitment to an accountable positionality, which goes beyond declaring one's racial, class and gender positioning and moves to a public commitment to be held accountable, a commitment to support queers, trans people and feminists of colour in their political struggle and not just use their bodies and theories to advance their careers. (p. 299)

Likewise, Warner (2004) claims that "the continued demonstration of queer normality is counterproductive—it does little more than demonstrate the middle-class White male hiding in all of us, and does not allow us to discover anything new" (p. 335). I agree and have worked, with some success, to recognize my privilege as a middle-class White male and to conduct myself with racial and class sensitivity. This is an ongoing project of accountability that will never be complete.

Talburt and Rasmussen (2010) and Airton (2013) seem to concur that to privilege identities and unified subjects is perilous; the duo asserts that "by accepting representational and transformational premises as fundamental to its purposes, queer research participates in producing the subjects on which liberalism (and neoliberalism) depends" (p. 7). To defend queer theory against (or perhaps to endorse) charges of complicity in the neoliberal project is beyond the scope of this manuscript. However, it is the way in which Crowley and Rasmussen (2010) and Talburt and Rasmussen (2010) leverage queer studies' alleged lack of reflexivity and its privileging of a tacit strategic essentialism, respectively, into a call for a new "after-queer" paradigm that I find troubling. The "strategic essentialism" Talburt and Rasmussen cite is the privileging of "visible queer subjects" and "regulatory straight spaces" that queer scholarship requires in order to understand itself as queer (p. 4). The irony is unmistakable; to accuse an entire discipline of a particular blunder, and to summarily categorize it as an error rather than a contextually (in)appropriate strategy, is to commit the very error of strategic essentialism that they condemn. The authors do recognize some degree of self-contradiction built into their mandate, however: "By presenting the language of 'after-queer', we recognize that we enter a problematic temporal and spatial landscape, as 'queer' itself is neither uncontested nor complete. Constituting an 'after' queer suggests precisely the sort of narrative of progress we wish to question" (p. 5).

With its implicit narrative of progress, then, after-queer struggles to maintain postmodern incredulity (see Chapter 5 of this document). I insist further that an appeal to the language and positionality of after-queer marks an unhelpful deviation from the central tenets of queer theory, those from which it claims scion status and those that, unlike a strategic essentialism of queer subjects and straight spaces, can in reality be attributed to the field as a whole. For one thing,

queer is inherently reflexive. That is, it is self-referential and always evolving (in much the same way I contend that the "post" in postmodernism is iterative and precludes the utility of "post-postmodernism," a term Vermeulen & van den Akker (2010, p. 3) describe as "syntactically correct but semantically meaningless"). But more than that, queer resists boundaries. To demarcate after-queer as somehow oppositional to queer is to disavow queerness itself. Airton (2013) moves beyond queer subjects into a subjectless project, while Ruitenberg (2010) seeks to transcend queer identity and instead engages with political subjectivity. In some sense, then, they appear to climb out of queer and into the world of after-queer. And yet, are we to challenge the primordial "queerness" of their projects? While Talburt, Rasmussen and Crowley have identified serious issues that plague some samples of queer research, to my mind after-queer presents as an obstructive conceptual derailment. Queer theory is, at its heart, enduringly postfoundational, reflexive, and incomplete; those promulgating an oppositional, after-queer framework might instead invest their collective energy in galvanizing queer politics and uniting queer subjectivities toward culturally transformative ends.

Sexuality & Socialism

The pithy Daniel Warner (2004) argues that a veridical queer movement would stop adding letters to LGBT research and instead mobilize anyone who "doesn't fit in" to argue against normalization altogether: "Everyone can be/is queer. To be straight takes effort: it takes learning your role, performing on cue and denying whatever part of yourself lies outside of the law" (p. 325). This conception shares many common threads with Ruitenberg's (2010) Rancièrean reading of queer politics and guides us into Sherry Wolf's (2009) neo-Marxist analysis of sexual liberation. Wolf concurs with Marxist claims that the dominant, ruling class—a small, manipulative minority of the population—depends on propagating ideas that "reinforce

division and a sense of powerlessness among the exploited" (location 37). These divisions include the canonical "-isms" (e.g., sexism, racism, nationalism) but her exploration of the history of gay-rights organizations reveals that internal fracturing pathologically impedes progress even within seemingly cohesive civil rights movements. She, too, implores us to transcend divisive identity politics, citing examples of workers' unions collaborating with LGBT rights movements, such as the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union (MCS) in the 1930s and '40s, which challenged racism, defended gay rights and won material gains for their workers.

While circumstances may call for special attention to the particular challenges faced by sexual and gender minorities (for instance, stand-alone sexual orientation and gender identity protection policies in school divisions are vital), I find a broad-strokes, utopian socialist approach to sexual liberation very compelling. Wolf (2009) spells it out clearly:

> If we lived in a truly free society in which material and social constraints were removed, people would be neither oppressed nor even defined by their sexual or gender identities. Only then could we begin to see how a liberated human sexuality could evolve and express itself. But in a class society that requires certain behavioral norms to discipline its workforce and ideology to justify the nuclear family, reactionary sexual ideas—including gender norms—are means of stoking division and repressing society as a whole. (location 47)

It is also important to recognize that the dominant class is not all filthy-rich heterosexual white males. The twice-elected president of the United States—a republic built on Black slavery—is African-American, and the premier of Ontario—a province in a nation in which homosexuality was illegal until forty-five years ago—is a lesbian woman. That the ruling class is being infiltrated, if hardly transformed, by those with identity-based membership in oppressed groups

is both heartening and ironic. This ironic progress, along with structural impediments to further revolution, is among the unexpected topics of discussion educators should come to expect in a queer, critical, postmodern pedagogical space such as P4C, even among young people. The teacher has a role in this, too, of course, and I elaborate on what queer pedagogy *might* look like in action in Chapter 4. Before we flip on the classroom lights, however, I wish to direct your attention to the projector, for a screening of portions of what I see as a "quintessentially queer" cinematic art project.

Why James Franco is Queer

Interior. Leather Bar. (Franco et al., 2013) is an American independent film directed by James Franco and Travis Matthews. The docufiction stars Franco and Matthews, as well as other actors, as themselves, reimagining—and, to a certain extent, recreating—the 40 minutes of X-rated footage deleted from William Friedkin's 1980 film *Cruising,* which starred Al Pacino as a straight cop who goes undercover in New York's gay leather scene to find a serial killer. The *process* of recreating the footage serves as the focal point of the motion picture, with the fully produced, reimagined scenes serving as punctuation throughout the film. While much of the crew of *Interior. Leather Bar.* is female, the entire integrated cast is male, as the lost footage was set in a gay S&M bar.

Matthews is an openly gay filmmaker; Franco publicly dates women but has thus far played three gay characters in his acting career, eliciting questions about his sexuality. He dodges such rumours with levity and charm, however, choosing neither to confirm nor deny them (Staskiewicz, 2011). By neither defending his (hetero)sexuality to critics nor distancing his identification with LGBTQ fans, Franco is a true ally in Ruitenberg's (2010) sense, as she claims that "the interventions of allies who sustain ambiguity in their identity because they insist it is

their political subjectivity and not their identity that matters in queering the distribution of the sensible, can be unsettling and powerful" (p. 631). Indeed, in April 2013, Franco received the Miami Gay & Lesbian Film Festival's "Ally Award" for his unfettered support of the gay community (PRNewswire, 2013).

In addition to Franco and Matthews, *Interior. Leather Bar.* depicts Val Lauren, who plays Pacino's character in the remade footage, grappling with the personal and professional challenges of starring in a gay adult film. Lauren and Franco have been friends since college and the movie captures a frank dialogue between them around Franco's vision for the film and Lauren's reservations. Lauren's wife is supportive—joking with him to remember to "give it," don't "take it" (9:23)—but his agent warns that whether "Franco's faggot project" (9:45) is pornographic or not, people will see it as such and Lauren's career will suffer. Refreshingly, his agent is the only source of homophobia in the film. That is not to say there is an absence of discomfort and uncertainty, but it is interesting to see how both professionalism and artistry queer the set of the film, partially dissolving sexual identity into a nebula of artistic license and performance, where what is at stake is one's perceived talent as an actor, not as a man.

Early on, a selection of secondary cast members are asked individually on camera about what they think of the project. One man, who actually performs oral sex on his real-life partner later in the film, says:

> I think the atmosphere on the day of the shoot is going to be sexually charged. I think there's going to be a lot of tension. I know there's a bunch of straight guys in the cast and I don't know how they're going to react to the vibrating homosexuality that's going to be all around them. (8:20)

Vibrating homosexuality, yes, but what I see more so is throbbing queerness. Only once or twice in the film is any cast member depicted identifying *as gay*. Instead, vectors of desire and repulsion are hinted at, such as the one cast member who says he hopes to make out with Franco, and another who says "[the filming] should be pretty hot" (7:30). One actor swallows hard and bites his lip as he describes why he chose to involve himself in the project: to explore something that he is afraid of (7:10). Unclear to the audience is the locus of fear, whether it is sadomasochism, public sex, homosexuality, or trance music, and this is one of numerous queer scenes in the film. Interestingly, these queer moments are juxtaposed at times with less queer moments. For instance, in conversation a few actors do explicitly identify as "not gay" or "straight." One man thought it was ironic he got the call to play a drag queen in the film while he was "at a girl's house" (19:53). Ironic, yes, but only in a heteronormative framework that is itself baked with irony.

Val Lauren's discomfort is palpable throughout the film (though his anxiety has metanarrative appeal, since he is playing a character who was similarly out of his element). During lunch break on set, Franco and Lauren step outside to digest what they have just witnessed: a violent paddling scene that left welts and bruises on the buttocks of more than one actor. Lauren concedes that if the scene had been heterosexual, it would have been less foreign to him but still not okay. The sexual violence troubled him as he felt it was inherently "in bad taste" (37:59). Franco takes the opportunity to queer the moment on multiple levels. First, he shakes up heteronormativity:

> I don't like the fact that I feel I've been brought up to think a certain way.... I don't like realizing that my mind has been twisted by the way that the world has been set up around me. And what that is, is straight, normative kind of behaviour and it's fucking instilled

> into my brain.... So if there's a way for me to kind of break that up in my own mind, I'm all for it. (35:25)

The trope of boy-meets-girl and sunset-gallivanting is not the only normative regime that Franco seeks to topple. Hollywood's glorification of gruesome violence contrasted with its homophobia and sex-negativity also grinds his gears: "In previews, [they] show people getting fucking blown away but don't show gay sex.... Why don't they give us violence in a more palatable way and amp up the sex?" (36:45). And finally, Franco defends the gay S&M scene from Lauren's accusation that it is in bad taste. When Lauren implores him, "What story are we telling? I don't know what story we're telling" (38:20), Franco replies:

> About a guy, who's uncomfortable, goes undercover into this world. And in the original movie, it was as if he was going *down* into a deep, dark place. He was going down into an evil place.... You're playing a guy who's going undercover, but to me he's not going to a dark, evil place. He's going actually to a place that's, I think, beautiful and attractive. (38:25)

Lauren by now is incredulous and uncomfortable, worried for the repercussions this project and Franco's outspokenness might have for Franco's personal and professional life. Franco admits that the uncertainty is a major constituent of the project: "I don't know fully what's going on. It's about being here, it's about doing this, experiencing this, putting ourselves out there. That's half of it—just *doing it"* (40:05). That, he says, and the transgressive act of being featured in this film as well as Disney movies.

Interior. Leather Bar., then, is saturated with queerness, and not because (or perhaps in spite of the fact that) it is a gay-themed film. The set is a space of uncertain and ill-defined sexual persuasions, histories and future trajectories. Notably, while by the end of the film we

start to get a "feel" for the sexual orientation of most of the cast members, one major actor—"Master Avery" who tries to seduce Lauren's character and who violently "paddles" another—remains opaque and mysterious. His queerness is captivating, particularly in contrast to the strained proclamations of heterosexuality by Lauren and the "ironic drag queen," and of homosexuality by the actor who is "living the gay dream" by getting paid to "cruise" (6:35). I would argue further that it is this disparity between queer and un-queer that creates, enables or performs this queer space. Total opacity and dogged professionalism without the motley expressions of excitement, discomfort, ambivalence and internal conflict among the cast would hardly be queer (or interesting), and neither would universal declarations of sexual identity without room for excess, possibility and the unexpected.

James Franco poignantly espouses and engenders queerness as well. Without ever staking claim to his privileged status as a straight or heterosexual man, Franco describes his mission to unsettle heteronormative, fairy tale tropes, the fear of sex—and especially gay sex—in mainstream media, and the degradation of the unknown as dark, evil or in bad taste. Further, the film itself can be viewed as queer pedagogy; by presenting it in a tasteful, affirming way, *Interior. Leather Bar.* instructs us about how gay S&M is just one of many healthy expressions of desire and that seeing it in this light does not make anyone gay or straight, but instead delightfully queer.

Chapter 4 – Queer Critical Pedagogy

> How can we frame our struggle so that it is not riveted to the consequences of capitalism alone, but that it challenges capitalism as a social ecology coterminous with and constitutive of capitalism? Global warming and nature-society relations, imperialism, racism, speciesism, sexism, homophobia, genocide and epistemicide are not independent of the capitalist accumulation process, but mutually inform one another. (Peter McLaren, 2014, p. 159)

> The theory and practice of P4C challenges the hidden discrimination of epistemic injustice by making room for children as thinkers, and demands children to be taken seriously as knowers. (Karin Murris, 2013, p. 257)

P4C, Gender Essentialism and Ethical Topography

The central hypothesis around which this thesis revolves is that Philosophy for Children has the potential to reduce bullying based on gender identity and expression. Channeling the fluidic tenets of queer theory outlined in Chapter 3, Jennifer Bleazby (2007) posits that P4C is inherently anti-dualistic and thus can reconstruct gendered epistemologies, as it rejects the idea that "masculine" abstract and objective knowledge and concepts are "completely severed from 'feminine' subjectivity, corporeality and the concrete" (p. 196). Further, Bleazby claims that the collapsing of traditional gender dualisms in P4C's community of inquiry (CI), and its emphasis on diversity, context, and the rejection of absolutism, can discourage gender stereotyping. Accordingly,

> P4C students don't assume that males who diverge from the dominant stereotype, such as homosexual males, are weird and inferior. Nor do they assume that those women who display some typically "masculine" trait are abnormal. Students can evaluate whether such differences are problematic, unimportant, or valuable. Since the CI values diverse opinions and experiences because they problematize experiences, which gives rise to inquiry and the construction of more objective (more inclusive) knowledge, students

> who participate in the CI are likely to appreciate individual differences that do exist. (p. 200)

Furthermore, though literature on the relationship between shifting attitudes and changes in behaviour is ambiguous (see Chapter 2), Bleazby (2007) believes the improved communication skills and reconstructed gender epistemologies fostered by P4C could help reduce bullying:

> Consequently, boys may be less likely to feel the need to exclude, dominate and control girls and "non-masculine" boys through harassment, ridicule, violence and social alienation. In fact, P4C's reconstruction of the dualistic construction of gender should help students realize that these gender stereotypes are unachievable because they require a separation of things that are intertwined and interdependent. (pp. 203-204)

Though I think it is reasonable to assert that P4C has the distinct *potential* to reduce gender-based harassment, it comes with no guarantee. Real-world learning is fraught with uncertainty, and while P4C is student-centred pedagogy, teachers nevertheless assume a crucial and delicate role in facilitating the sound construction of knowledge and cultivating *reasonableness*—the ability to use good reasons to convince others, as well as the capacity to change one's mind when presented with good reasons to do so (Bleazby, 2011, p. 465)—in their students. This is a tall order.

It is not only the instrumental effectiveness of P4C that warrants interrogation, but its goals and the methods used to achieve them. Given the content-flexibility and collaborative pedagogy of P4C, and the space this creates for student-driven, teacher-guided discussions about contentious topics like gender and sexuality, ethics and morality, and metaphysics, it is no surprise that ethical concerns have surfaced from a number of camps. Maughn Gregory (2011)

published a condensation of a dialogue that occurred between some leading P4C scholars at a seminar in Mendham, New Jersey, in 2008, a dialogue that delineates and responds to ethical concerns from the conservative right, developmental psychologists, cultural and critical theorists, and postmodernists. This thesis will constellate and discuss critiques from the latter two camps, critical theory (Chapter 4) and postmodernism (Chapter 5). Here I make the case that P4C engenders ethically sound queer pedagogy, that queer pedagogy is embedded in critical pedagogy, and that P4C, as a potential site of collision between a neo-Marxist, radical social ontology and perceived injustice, may fuel consciousness-raising, Freirean just ire, and activism. Finally, I discuss a case study of a successful community of inquiry around gender diversity (Ryan et al., 2013) and argue that it serves as a demonstration of queer, critical pedagogy. From there I draw parallels and points of divergence between the teacher's method in the case study and the method of P4C.

Critical Theory: The Critique

Gregory (2011) and his team cite critical theorists who claim that the critical thinking espoused by P4C is politically and morally neutral, teaching children merely *how* to think rather than *what* to think. To these critics, neutral education is a specious proposition and, by not waking students to the hegemony of the system, it winds up being oppressive. Accordingly, the critics argue that education should be explicitly emancipatory and consciousness-raising; value-neutral critical thinking or "rationality," it is claimed, could end up being a tool to pursue neoliberal, patriarchal desires, or to creatively oppress others (pp. 203-204). Further, the contributors claim that "many people outside of P4C think of critical thinking as an individual thing—something we do alone, inside our own heads, whereas consciousness-raising typically involves understanding our connections to others, and aims at solidarity" (p. 204). Certainly, a

solipsistic appraisal of critical thinking puts it at odds with the collaborative learning model of P4C.

We can look to Paulo Freire for insights on critical pedagogy and the insidious oppression of neutrality. In *Pedagogy of Freedom,* he echoes these concerns of critical theorists, claiming that a radical liberating critical pedagogy must defend an educational practice where teaching is never done in a "cold, mechanical, and deceptively neutral manner" (as cited in Freire, 2004, p. XLI). However, defending critical thinking against charges of nefarious neutrality, he goes on to say in his posthumous *Pedagogy of Indignation*: "Without allowing myself to fall into the temptation of aggressive rationalism ... I must insist on the importance of critically apprehending the reasons behind the facts we become involved in.... This methodological rigor in one's curiosity is what gradually brings greater precision to one's findings" (2004, pp. 5-6). Later, he claims that critical thinking, or "the ability to observe, to compare, and to evaluate ... arises then as a fundamental competency" (p. 7).

Formulating their own response to critical theorists, Gregory's (2011) forum claims that P4C is *relatively* value-neutral but committed to certain normative principles that entice youth to be *critical of the world* and to apprehend the ethical and political meaning of experience. It seems clear, then, that Freire, a model critical pedagogue, would actually have been a supporter of P4C. Indeed, one of the contributors suggests that there was an exchange between P4C's founder, Matthew Lipman, and Paulo Freire and that the two of them saw their work as sharing a kind of libratory agenda (p. 204). Further, numerous scholars—feminists and others—perceive the method of P4C as a form of critical pedagogy in that it redistributes power from teacher to students, gives voice to the marginalized, makes adults take children's ideas seriously, and encourages collaboration (p. 204).

If P4C stands up to charges of oppressive neutrality, then we are left to further conceptualize critical pedagogy and its relationship to queer theory. Broadly, critical pedagogy engages learners in social problem solving by enabling them to think about which problems are important to solve, according to whom, to what ends, and to whose benefit (Marri & Walker, 2008). In addition, an instructor's willingness to engage with students around difficult issues, to cultivate students' identities as courageous activists, and to actively desire structural change embodies critical pedagogy (Mayo, Jr., 2013). The space shared by critical pedagogy and queer theory is illuminated by the words of André Grace: "Queer theory contests, interrogates, and disrupts systemic and structural relationships of power that are historically caught up in heteronormative attitudes, values, and practices, as well as heteronormative ideological, linguistic, existential, and strategic conventions and constructs" (2008, p. 718). Sherry Wolf's (2009) Marxist approach to sexual liberation is salient here as well, as she claims that sexual and gender oppression is knotted into our class-based society, which relies on heteronormativity to maintain a well-behaved, productive working class. Gender norms, she claims, "are a means of stoking division and repressing society as a whole" (location 47).

Karleen Pendleton Jiménez (2009) also demonstrates the ways in which queer pedagogy bleeds into a wider critical pedagogy. "As categories of sexual identity break open," she writes, "other categories follow.... If [queers] have already stood up for themselves, speaking their truths, in one area of their lives, why not stand up for themselves in other areas?" (pp. 173-174). Further, she borrows from Alan Sears, asserting that queer education disrupts categorical thinking, encourages interpersonal intelligence, and stimulates critical consciousness (p. 174). Jennifer Simpson (2012) uses queer and critical interchangeably when she describes education

that calls for a radical disruption of normality and of the binaries of straight and queer (p. 940). Identity categories are blurred for Simpson as well, as she claims that society's pervasive neoliberal epistemology regulates the bounds of what it means to be human in a way that privileges Whiteness and heterosexuality.

Cris Mayo, too, engages with queer/critical existential fluidity; she sees individual experiences as intersections of multiple and intermittent identities, and categories as simultaneously "insufficient, crucial, and unstable" (2007, p. 68). Plus, she claims that the intersectional focus she advocates prevents us from disentangling queerness from race, ethnicity, gender, age and an array of other facets of identity (p. 71), which seems to bolster a critical, even Marxist, pedagogical approach to education. Indeed, Mayo writes that "because the press of heterosexism, racism, genderism, and homophobia affects so many people, then, *queers find themselves broadening their understandings of what might constitute queerness* or gayness or whatever the term they organize around might be" (p. 69, italics mine). Arguably, then, a queer theory that neglects the numerous, multi-vectored, turbulent categories from which we articulate and experience identity, and which are inextricably bound with and indeed co-constitute our sexual and gender subjectivities, is narrow, exclusionary and "un-queer." Queer pedagogy complements critical pedagogy, and a Marxist framework like that of Wolf (2009) offers a propitious springboard for consciousness-raising and transformation.

Social Ontology and Just Ire

A number of scholars irradiate the social constitution of reality, undermining a neoliberal epistemology (Simpson, 2012) that is built on a soft, sinking foundation of individualism and accumulation. For instance, Judith Butler's (2009) radical ontology is grounded in universal precariousness or corporeal vulnerability, a precariousness that is differentially distributed in and

as *precarity*. Accordingly, she wonders "if such a view entails a critique of individualism, how do we begin to think about ways to assume responsibility for the minimization of precarity? If the ontology of the body serves as a point of departure for such a rethinking of responsibility, it is precisely because, in its surface and its depth, the body is a social phenomenon" (p. 32). She goes on to posit: "Could it be that when I assume responsibility what becomes clear is that who 'I' am is bound up with others in necessary ways? Am I even thinkable without that world of others? In effect, could it be that through the process of assuming responsibility the 'I' shows itself to be, at least partially, a 'we'?" (p. 35). Here Butler challenges the atomism that characterizes the ethos of Western, neoliberal autonomy; from birth until death, the survival of each of us is dependent on "a network of hands" (p. 14).

Consistent with Butler's line of thought, Jennifer Simpson claims that "insisting on the work of the 'we' is a primary means to resisting epistemological neoliberalism" (2012, p. 952), the latter being in structural tension with the formulation of a transgressive public that would resist such an ideological architecture. Recall the words of James Franco (Chapter 3), who lamented the way his mind has been "twisted" by the world to perceive reality in a straight, normative way. Franco has an astute understanding of the insidiousness of ideology, of dominant structures of knowing, and of both how crucial and difficult it is to overcome our indoctrination. Freire concurs, and like Franco—himself a well-read scholar who wields art as a form of resistance—the challenge brings him joy: "I like to be human ... because changing the world is as hard as it is possible. It is the relationship between the difficulty and possibility of changing the world that poses the question of how important the role of awareness is in history" (2004, pp. 14-15).

Awareness facilitates the imagining of alternatives. Makere Stewart-Harawira offers an indigenous perspective, positing an ontology that is grounded in the interconnectedness of all existence, a principle that "governs all relationships. It governs relationships between all human beings, between all other forms of life, and binds all together within one continuous web of creation" (2005, p. 155). She writes that this paramount principle of interconnectedness engenders the principle of balance, expressed as reciprocity and deep compassion, a code of "no separation, no exclusion, for to exclude the other is to exclude oneself, and to hurt the other is to hurt oneself. The indigenous mind, then, is the compassionate mind" (p. 156). This sentiment is captured well by an elementary student quoted in Ryan et al. (2013), who, after spending several weeks immersed in a community of inquiry, mused: "I don't think that it's a good thing to laugh at someone being different because if you ever were to have the same difference as them, you would be laughing at yourself" (p. 101).

The indigenous ontology conveyed by Stewart-Harawira (2005) resists a neoliberal epistemology, as the former is rooted in "eco-humanism" and economic principles that capture the spiritual reality of existence and the elemental interconnectedness of all facets of being (p. 160). To those familiar with my work, an attitude of spirituality may seem at odds with the hyper-materialism that governs my research trajectory. Borrowing a vaguely Heideggerian lexicon, I see the inherent totality of the *ontic*—of *precategorical thinghood* bound by immutable natural laws—as necessarily precluding an external domain from which a pure, agential, eternally culpable *causa sui,* or the soul, could emerge. Thus libertarian free will—or the freedom to choose to choose to choose, *ad infinitum*—is incoherent, a mirage steadfastly maintained by neoliberal (and especially Christian) ideology that relies on and perpetuates shame, guilt, punishment, competition and entitlement. Notions of spirituality such as Stewart-

Harawira's point to an immateriality—a "beyond the ontic"—that has been highjacked and perverted by religion and Western individualism. However, I am keen to embrace an indigenous spirituality such as hers—which to my mind suggests pantheism, meditation and transcendence— for it and free will skepticism are unlikely bedfellows, guiding us together toward a social ontology of empathy, compassion, and interdependence—of 'I' as 'we'—as well as respect for all forms of life. Paulo Freire would seem to concur, for he once wrote "how urgent it is that we fight for more fundamental ethical principles, such as respect for life of human beings, the life of other animals, of birds, and for the life of rivers and forests" (as cited in Freire, 2004, p. XLII).

Borrowing from John Dewey, Jennifer Bleazby advocates a middle-ground theory, claiming that in P4C relativism and absolutism "are operationally co-dependent in the process of acquiring knowledge and meaning" (2011, p. 454). Ideas, she writes, "must effectively interact with an extra-mental reality in order be true"; this reality is social and cultural, and thus ideas will be more efficacious if they account for the perspectives of others (p. 460). I would argue that, more abstractly, this extra-mental, extra-subjective reality, as a precondition of the social, is *material* and, furthermore, *ontic.* If libertarian free will is logically incoherent and *a priori* impossible—and I believe it is—and if this truth constitutes a crucial aspect of extra-mental reality—and I believe it does—then "students must simultaneously adapt themselves, their interests and their beliefs in accordance with the facts of the case" (Bleazby, 2011, p. 462). In other words, knowledge built on middle-ground pragmatism is rooted in certain objective truths, verifiable through basic logic; these truths, excavated with the precision trowel of critical thinking, include the obliteration of *causa sui*, of the atomized individual, and of any god who operates on guilt, rewards and threats.

While a comprehensive discussion of the merits and risks of embracing free will skepticism are beyond the scope of this manuscript, I would suggest that the critical thinking skills cultivated by P4C *are* likely to lead learners to resist dogma, to challenge the logical and ethical contradictions built into organized religion, and to assemble a worldview that recognizes the radical contingency of our attitudes, values, beliefs and behaviours—all good things. And yet, while I expect few, if any, P4C pupils to emerge from such critical pedagogy as hard-determinist apostates (though one can dream), I feel it a legitimate concern that the emphasis of the program on *caring thinking* and the potential apprehension of a mechanistic outlook may render some students overly acquiescent. Matthew Schertz (2007), seeking to avoid "passive empathy" with P4C, conceptualizes empathy as cognitive *and* affective, an intersubjective, dialectical, psychological phenomenon that spawns moral action (p. 190). Schertz claims he has witnessed students using collaborative inquiry derived from P4C to mediate disputes among one another, which suggests that such forms of inquiry can serve to defuse conflict and discharge negative affect.

In the moment, conflict resolution can be beneficial (of course!) but as an ethos it may actually be complicit with a stultifying hidden curriculum in Canadian schools. A curriculum analysis performed by Kathy Bickmore in 2005 revealed that grades one through ten English Language Arts, Social Sciences, and Health curricula in Manitoba, Ontario and Nova Scotia promote values of harmony and non-confrontation ("discursive peacekeeping") rather than social transformation ("democratic peacebuilding") (p. 177). Overall, she writes, "students are essentially expected to 'be good'—to cooperate and communicate without much sound nor fury—a very familiar notion of proper school behaviour" (p. 168). These subtle attempts at tranquilization, along with "the 'expanding horizons' notion, in which younger children's worlds

are assumed to be simple and local" (p. 166), can help explain why potentially controversial issues of social conflict are treated carefully, if at all, in Canadian curricula.

Gerald Walton (2005) claims that as a hegemonic cultural mechanism, the hidden curriculum—i.e., learning that is beyond the boundaries of the formal curriculum—

> serves dominant interests not through sheer repression of the underprivileged, but through social practices that are normalized over time and mask the ways in which the disadvantaged participate in their own oppression.... For students who are marginalized through constructs of identity such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, class, physical and mental ability, and sexuality, the effects of the hidden curriculum can render their school lives particularly challenging to negotiate and even to survive. (p. 19)

Walton argues that a critical lens—one that grasps the nature of power and privilege—can reveal the hidden curriculum in schools, undermining the self-evident "normality" of heterosexism, for instance, and advancing social justice. This hidden curriculum, challenging the very survival of some individuals, is a form of *cultural violence*, "making what should be transparent opaque by making injustice appear just, disguising privilege as merit, making privilege seem natural" (Kraemer, 2007, p. 28). Companionably, Bleazby (2011) asserts that a community of inquiry "makes truths more objective by revealing the hidden assumptions, agendas, biases and cultural backgrounds of the inquirers and the situations inquired into" (p. 460).Yet I would insist that there is one key ingredient to—and outcome of—critical pedagogy that these authors do not address.

Enter Freire once again. The founding father of critical pedagogy warns of the perils of a deterministic outlook, of perceiving reality as immutable, as predetermined: "The deproblematization of the future ... necessarily leads to an authoritarian death or negation of the

dream, of utopia, of hope" (2004, p. 34). Freire advocates for constructive indignation, reminding us that it is perfectly acceptable, even useful, to be pissed off by injustice: "I have the right to be angry and to express that anger, to hold it as my motivation to fight, just as I have the right to love and to express my love for the world, to hold it as my motivation to fight" (pp. 58-59). Thus, while critical thinking and collaborative learning—hallmarks of P4C—will ideally guide learners toward compassion and understanding (peacekeeping), on top of this, a critical pedagogical approach modelled by the adult in charge can inspire consciousness-raising and just ire. Such a "political and dialectical engagement with legitimate anger can inspire [queer] cultural action for social transformation" (Grace & Wells, 2007, p. 104), arousing peacebuilding and circumventing the tranquilization of young learners encouraged by Canadian curricula.

The Critical Pedagogue

Several themes emerged in my analysis of a case study featuring elementary students successfully learning about gender diversity and transgender experiences (Ryan et al., 2013): a) acknowledging the link between gender essentialism and bullying; b) overcoming epistemic injustice by recognizing the capacity of young children to discuss controversial issues; c) delineating the role of the teacher as critical pedagogue; and d) conceptualizing queer-as-critical pedagogy. The study documents the experiences of an American grade 3/4 teacher, Maree Bednar, as she addressed and taught about gender nonconformity, as well as the ways in which her students responded to those lessons.

Consistent with numerous scholars' appraisals that gender stereotypes can lead to gender-based harassment (e.g., García & Slesaransky-Poe, 2010; Grey et al., 2013; Renold, 2007; Taylor & Peter et al., 2011; Saewyc et al., 2014; Schwartz, 2007), Ryan et al. (2013) purport that gender diversity and nonconformity should be discussed in elementary school classrooms in order to

counter such harassment (p. 87). Further, they work from the premise that "teacher-mediated classroom discussions, activities, and reflections can provide opportunities for resisting gender norms, which students might not have felt safe enough to do on their own" (p. 86). And moreover, the authors recognize the propensity and capacity of young children to discuss gender and sexuality; Maree told her students they were engaging with such contentious topics because she felt they were mature enough to have those discussions and to share their perceptions and experiences with one another: "She did not treat the topic as one that was unknown, distant, or scary for children but instead as one that related to their lives—although one that people might have different opinions on, and certainly one that, at times, would require some additional clarification" (p. 96). Accordingly, Maree demonstrated "epistemic modesty" and cultivated "epistemic equality" (Murris, 2013, p. 246), and though Ryan and colleagues' study does not address the effect of Maree's educational practice on herself as pedagogue and person, Murris suggests that "learning *with* children could possibly be a life changing transformation for the adults involved" (p. 247)—an exciting proposition for educators.

Though nowhere in their study do Ryan et al. (2013) reference "critical pedagogy," I would argue that Maree is a model critical pedagogue, with one caveat. She recognized her role in creating a particular learning environment—a community of inquiry—but "it was the students' own experiences with gender that provided the impetus for their in-depth conversations, including some initial, surface-level recognition of the existence of gender-nonconforming and transgender people" (p. 92). Maree modeled how she expected her students to contribute to the discussion by using "unsensationalized and empathetic statements" (p. 97) and she did not impose her views but instead facilitated student-centred learning and collaborative knowledge-building. Indeed, as Murris (2013) claims, encouraging and permitting children to learn

collaboratively and to take risks by thinking out loud "exposes the cracks in the concepts of 'teacher', 'learner' and 'content'" (p. 252), engendering a democratic learning process.

However, while Maree's students eventually began to appreciate the socially constructed nature of gender norms, to espouse multiple perspectives, and to model empathetic discourse, righteous anger did not make an appearance in the study. Phrases such as "deeper understanding," "opened up," and "learned to share" captured the prominent learning outcomes, while the nearest reference to activism described students as becoming "independent problem solvers who had confidence to stand up as allies for classmates and community members who were being bullied or treated unfairly" (Ryan et al., 2013, p. 103). While understanding, sharing, openness and confidence are all crucial building blocks of social transformation, without a dose of passionate affect, of "just ire," these cognitive ingredients may lead to "passive empathy" and inaction.

This marks a source of tension between critical pedagogy and community of inquiry; the mandate of a critical pedagogue is to embody a passionate commitment to social justice and consciousness-raising, and yet, in a community of inquiry, the role of instructor is diffuse. Murris (2013) even refers to the children in P4C as teachers themselves (p. 250).We can see a paradoxical challenge materializing for a teacher using critical, communal pedagogy: how to avoid "deceptive neutrality," and thus insidious oppression, without overstepping into epistemic injustice through overt coercion. In other words, what is the function of teacher as critical mediator? Regardless, it is possible that Maree's learners were more emotionally engaged than the authors let on. It is also possible that her "unsensationalized" rhetoric was entirely appropriate for students as young as eight years old and that pedagogy that upsets young children may, in fact, be less ethical than more affectively neutral educational practice. Perhaps a

pedagogy of indignation is too volatile for elementary students. Or maybe Maree embodied the critical pedagogue, replete with just ire, but her students did not respond in kind. Surely, Ryan and colleagues leave us to wonder whether a fiery Freirean pedagogy is too heavy for younger children—a discussion we will put aside for later publication, as the central focus of this thesis is on adolescents.

Earlier in the manuscript I suggested that queer resists demarcation and closure, that it is not simply contained within sterile discourses of gender and sexuality. Queer is intersectional, it collides with ability, race, ethnicity, age, location, and class, and it tends toward broader appraisals of oppression and privilege. Maree's pedagogy demonstrates this fluidity, as conversations

> quickly branched out into ideas of marginalization, exclusion, and oppression more generally. By using a wide variety of materials about a range of people and experiences, Maree helped her students move from experiences that were familiar to them to ones that were more foreign. Together, they built a foundation that allowed the students to recognize unjust treatment in the world around them and formulate their own responses as advocates and allies. (p. 93)

I find this critical momentum in Maree's classroom invigorating, not only because it sustains a queer-as-critical theoretical framework but also because it demonstrates the ability of young students to make powerful connections and to scaffold their learning in transformative ways. Plus, such a framework appears to be multidirectional; if Maree's intention from the outset had been to cultivate awareness and sensitivity to issues of racism, colonialism or unbridled capitalism, a critical pedagogical approach would no doubt allow for, even insist upon, an apprehension of ostensibly "queer" issues such as gender and sexuality as well, for these matters

are mutually constellated. Just as we are all bound together "in one continuous web of creation," so too are our multiple subjectivities and the vectors of power that assail them.

Critical Philosophy For Children

Elementary teacher Maree Bednar in Ryan et al. (2013) did not employ Philosophy for Children curriculum, refer to her teaching practice as "community of inquiry," or explicitly name herself a critical pedagogue. However, by facilitating and moderating a student-led dialogue around a central stimulus (e.g., *Tomboy,* a film based on a book by Karleen Pendleton Jiménez), recognizing students' maturity and authority as bearers and creators of legitimate meaning, and emphasizing the right questions rather than correct answers, Maree has left little distance between her pedagogical practice and P4C. Furthermore, by passively cultivating critical consciousness in her students, by helping them draw connections between gender-based bullying and other social issues of local and global significance, and by eschewing neoliberal epistemologies—which "privilege knowledge as a mastery of concepts instead of knowledge as an engagement with a set of lived, embodied relationships" (Simpson, 2012, p. 950)—Maree has set herself on a path of critical pedagogy. And perhaps most importantly, Maree has demonstrated that a community of inquiry enacted in a framework of critical pedagogy can make schools more inclusive and safe for transgender and gender nonconforming youth. Keeping this case study in mind, I will now situate P4C as queer, critical pedagogy.

Maree (Ryan et al., 2013) prompted her students to forge conceptual connections; students' empathy swelled, and their efficacy bloomed, as together they found ways to connect the dots, to reify the abstract and to draw parallels between situations that affect real people in their lives. However, Maree did set out with an agenda, albeit a noble one—to help her students apprehend and appreciate the vastness of the gender spectrum—and I believe P4C's somewhat

nonfigurative, philosophical curricular launch pad potentiates two distinct advantages, and one disadvantage, when compared with Maree's more explicit mode of content.

The first advantage is that P4C's curriculum is less likely to get an educator in trouble with parents. The novellas themselves (see P4CA, n.d.a.), and other curricula compiled for the program (see for example University of Washington Center for Philosophy for Children, 2013), are rather understated and probably less thorny to legal guardians with conservative sensibilities than a trans-affirming film about a girl who is mistaken for a boy. This may help explain why P4C is popular among educators in Catholic jurisdictions such as Edmonton Catholic Schools and Mexico (J. Taylor, personal communication, May 7, 2014). Karleen Pendleton Jiménez (2009) claims an ethics of care requires that teachers queer education in order to meet the needs of sexual and gender minority students, and I wholeheartedly agree. In fact, Pendleton Jiménez's ethically-charged rhetoric arms teachers with a staunch defense against parents and administrators who claim that literature such as *Tomboy* has no place in an elementary school classroom. Still, whenever controversial material artifacts can be displaced by ephemeral, untraceable, and perhaps radical classroom dialogues that are centred around ostensibly innocuous curricula, I suspect many teachers will be on board. P4C does not accomplish social transformation around sexuality and gender expression using contentious novellas with names like "Tracy the Transsexual" or "Little Polly Amory." Instead, the associations are more subtle.

The second advantage of P4C over the educational practice captured by Ryan et al. (2013) is that it may be even more epistemically equitable. Maree's pedagogy was spawned on the premise *students lack knowledge on gender issues and should learn more about them. Prima facie*, this is rather accurate and unproblematic, and once this premise was established, the method used to explore gender diversity was seemingly democratic. Nonetheless, the premise

was imposed by Maree as teacher and epistemic authority. P4C's community of inquiry channels students' knowledge and experience, allowing them the opportunity to choose for themselves, collectively, which problems are worth solving. Accordingly, P4C (in theory) permits nearly ideal democratic conditions. The student collective selects the stimulus, decides on a problem to discuss, and works equitably through constructive dissensus toward an inclusive understanding of the issue at hand.

Start-to-finish student-driven pedagogy, as I have framed P4C, has its potential shortcomings of course, which Maree avoids by deciding for herself which problem needs solving. In Chapter 2, I discussed a research project by Tangen and Campbell (2010), which found that P4C did not decrease bullying behaviour in their school of study. One potential explanation they proffered was that the storybooks in the P4C curriculum may lack the authenticity to translate to students' lives:

> [It] may be that while the students at the P4C school are learning how to conduct discussions to problem-solve situations from story books, they may not see these stories as necessarily relating to their own lives and so may have difficulty transferring solutions presented in the story to their own lives. (p. 231)

While I think it specious to suggest that the novellas might somehow *inherently* lack authenticity, I do concur insofar as I would argue the authenticity has to be discovered and cultivated. If young learners are unable or unwilling to work toward translating abstract stories into meaningful, real-world conversations, what is a P4C adult facilitator to do? A skilled mediator no doubt relies on leading questions in order to guide the community of inquiry— indeed, this was Maree's primary role in Ryan et al. (2013)— but at what point does asking questions become giving answers? When does a tacit "objection, Your Honour" echo through the

hallways? This question is not for me alone to answer, though a discussion of postmodernism in Chapter 5 should lend some insight.

Queer Philosophy for Children

Throughout this manuscript, I have delineated the assemblage *queer-as-critical pedagogy*. This is not to say that queer and critical are equivalent or interchangeable concepts. Instead, queerness necessarily permeates critical pedagogy; put another way, queerness could be understood as "metamethod," as the mode in which the method of critical pedagogy is embedded. In Chapter 3, I highlighted several different ways queer politics finds instantiation. One can assert a queer counteridentity (for an example, pick any letter from the LGBTQ* catalogue), proclaiming one's disavowal of heterosexism, of sex-gender congruity, and/or of binaries such as homo-/heterosexual and male/female (Ruitenberg, 2010, p. 622). One can proclaim a queer political subjectivity, resisting the hierarchization inscribed in identities, leaving sexual categories to stew in an opaque nebula, and seeking to disrupt the distribution of the sensible (p. 623). Or, in a quasi-Marxist way, one can challenge homophobia by dissolving the subject and casting hyper-critical floodlights on the systemic, structural, institutionally-sanctioned physical and symbolic violence happening everywhere, to us and our loved ones—gay, straight, and everyone else—by extending "the presumed reach of homophobic harm to *everyone*" (Airton, 2013, p. 544). Each of these is a queer political strategy and what I think is most crucial to understand here is the recursiveness of queer and how this might play out in a setting such as P4C.

Given the fluidic tenets of queer theory, a queer pedagogy allows for the flux of these and other queer discursive strategies in order to disrupt sexism, gender essentialism and homophobia, as well as intersecting vectors of oppression. For instance, in a hypothetical P4C setting, one

student asserts the counteridentity of his transsexual aunt, challenging a subtly transphobic line of discussion. Another student laments that the coming out of Women's National Basketball Association star Brittney Griner as a lesbian should even be newsworthy, bemoaning the counterproductive distraction of identity politics that permeates popular culture. And her classmate notes that the predominantly Caucasian, bikini-clad magazine cut-outs adorning many boys' lockers are not only demeaning for women everywhere but perpetuate a culture of masculinist insecurity, insidious homophobia and White supremacy.

Teachers who facilitate P4C's community of inquiry should feel encouraged to hone their queerness, to subtly foment the oscillation of dissolving and re-materializing subjectivities, the ebb and flow of identities, the mobility of discourse over myriad terrains and obstacles. Karleen Pendleton Jiménez challenges teachers to queer their classrooms in order to live up to their responsibility of care: "[Queering the classroom] is a queer attempt to claim part of the most sacred of teacher's roles; many teachers feel love and pride in their role as nurturers. It is an offering of a comfortable role beside uncomfortable issues. It is a destabilizing and conflicted request for teachers to step up, and embrace, more thoroughly, their professional responsibilities" (2009, p. 178). This is doubtless a frightening call to heed, but P4C mitigates precarity with its emphasis on meaningfulness, rather than specious modernist concepts like truth or knowledge. As Jennifer Bleazby claims, this is the paramount value of the community of inquiry, "especially for children," she writes, "for whom so many experiences are new, strange and incoherent" (2011, p. 465). These descriptors no doubt apply to any teacher's experience of queering the classroom as well, and educators can rest assured knowing that P4C not only positions student-learners as teachers, but teachers as student-learners.

Section II

Chapter 5 – Postmodernism and the Rearticulation of Section I

> ... I lose patience with deconstructionists who act like their work has no political consequences. If postmodernism undermines education for critical rationality, or norms of human liberation that come from the experiences of the underprivileged, we know who will benefit and who will suffer as a consequence! (Featured panelist in Gregory, 2011, p. 211)

Postmodernist Challenges to P4C

I attempted to demonstrate in Chapter 4 that concerns brought against Philosophy for Children by critical theorists can be assuaged, in part, by the incorporation of critical pedagogues in P4C. In keeping with a major theme of this thesis—namely, paradox—I will now address objections from postmodernists; in effect, the ethics-derived protestations from critical theorists and postmodernists are oppositional and yet both can be construed as valid. The former worry P4C is value-neutral and politically compliant, while the latter claim it is imperialistic and hegemonic (Gregory, 2011, p. 212). Each camp, then, discerns a similar problem—namely, White Western hegemony—and yet they seem to proffer opposing pedagogical strategies to counter the issue: respectively, concerted rabblerousing around a loosely unified conception of oppression, and indefinite, continuous suspicion of and abstention from any archetypal modelling of the "philosophical child." To borrow a catachrestic formula—the metamodernist both-neither dynamic—from Vermeulen and van den Akker (2010, p. 6), I contend that each camp is *neither* incorrect *and* correct. That is, the tension between critical theory and postmodernism must be held indefinitely, lest they both become *neither* correct *nor* useful. In fact, such a formula holds for Section I of this manuscript, the entirety of which I claim is neither ill-founded nor impervious to radical, aggressive deconstruction.

Previously, I addressed critical theorists' concerns voiced by Gregory (2011) by making the case that P4C—an ostensibly modernist endeavour—could, if executed with diligence and

care, serve as critical pedagogy. The movement toward consciousness-raising from an otherwise "deceptively neutral" teaching practice is dependent on the adult facilitator, who is bound by a postmodern ethics to negotiate the tensions between oppressive passiveness and coercive assertiveness. Thus, we can see how, as a "structure of feeling" (Vermeulen & van den Akker, 2010), postmodernism pervades critical theory/pedagogy and imbues it with friction; they do not share a common form but instead are threaded together in different levels of abstraction and conceptual depth, a relationship I describe as *philosophical parallax*. This postmodern friction characterizes and problematizes the tenuous relationship between critical theory and postmodernism when they are positioned equivalently as concepts, as in the previous paragraph.

A discussion of postmodernist ethical resistance to P4C calls first for a clarification of the tenets and nature of postmodernism. Synthesizing numerous scholars' appraisals, Kaya Yilmaz (2010) works to map out the meaning of postmodernism, a task complicated by the "anti-essentialist and anti-foundationalist character of postmodernism" itself (p. 780). Metatheoretical convolutions notwithstanding, Yilmaz posits postmodernism as a "loose alliance of intellectual perspectives ... which critique and challenge the basic assumptions of modernism about knowledge and reality" (p. 780). A founding father of postmodernism is Jean-François Lyotard (Vermeulen & van den Akker, 2010; Yilmaz, 2010), who characterizes the movement, in part, as "incredulity toward metanarratives" (as cited in Yilmaz, 2010, p. 782). This incredulity is often misinterpreted as outright denunciation or opposition, which can lead to the obstructive modernism/postmodernism binary (p. 784). I am most compelled by Usher and Edwards' conception, as they write that "postmodernism is best understood as a state of mind, a critical, self-referential posture and style, a different way of seeing and working, rather than a fixed body of ideas, a clearly worked-out position or a set of critical methods and techniques" (1994, p. 2).

And so, one way to think of postmodernism is not as an alternative valence to modernism but as a critical lens through which we can approach ethics, methodology, analysis, and the like in more intricate ways. Reflecting our own subjectivity back at us, observations and interpretations made through a postmodernist lens present with a certain messiness, lacking the reassuring clarity and coherence of those made through an empirical lens. This murkiness can make it difficult to respond to perceived material injustices, no matter how much our gut may tell us how to proceed.

How, then, to advance emancipatory activism in the face of postmodern incredulity and uncertainty? One way to begin is to tease out the common threads of postmodernism and critical pedagogy. Speaking as a social worker and caring professional, the insights of Phillip Dybicz (2011) translate well to teaching in schools as well: "The paradigmatic shift required to successfully employ postmodern practices has profound implications for the practitioner. Fundamentally, it requires the practitioner to move from viewing interventions as an endeavor at problem-solving to viewing them as endeavors at consciousness-raising... [and] dialectical inquiry is what comprises the consciousness-raising effort" (pp. 108-109). Here Dybicz clearly, if indirectly, conceptualizes P4C as postmodern and critical practice, where intervening (teaching and learning) is more about recognizing and formulating problems than about solving them. That way, the consciousness-raising and just ire cultivated in dialectical inquiry can be put to use by students outside of the classroom, where problems of inequity can be addressed through networked activism. P4C as postmodern practice is captured well in the Philosophy for Children Alberta (P4CA) profile video, too, where one facilitator says something quite fitting: "[P4C] is unique because it avoids kids learning about the world through answers and gets at it a different way through questions. That process is unique because a question is something that a child can

own and make theirs and an answer isn't in the same way" (P4CA, n.d.b, 4:55). Indeed, I contend that P4C's destabilizing of the primacy of answers, and its stressing of valid questions and good reasons, shakes up taken-for-granted concepts like "teacher," "learner," and "content" in much the same way that Murris (2013) claims its emphasis on thinking out loud and collaborative learning does (p. 252).

An historically modernist project situated around the metanarrative of rationality, P4C stands up to postmodernist critique when its meaning and value are challenged and enhanced through postfoundational theoretical framing and discourse. As Gregory (2011) writes: "There have been postmodern critics of P4C who have noticed this hidden curriculum of the 'reasonable' or 'philosophical' child, and critiqued it as just one normative model of human subjectivity among many, without any objective or foundational reasons to privilege it over others." Gregory's cited response from Ann Margaret-Sharp, the co-founder of the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children, is that there are of course some ideals of personhood built into P4C but that these commitments are not dogmas and have no absolutist foundation (pp. 206, 208). And besides, Gregory shows there are a number of non-foundational reasons for favouring certain ways of life over others, such as having subjected them to peer-review, our willingness to correct them in the light of new evidence, and their usefulness in enabling us to act intelligibly in the world (p. 208). Moreover, he claims that there is a lesser commitment to specific ideas and values, as they will be in constant flux thanks to the program's prior commitments to existential pursuits and practices. There is more humility in P4C about specific beliefs and values than about the methods and assumptions employed to get to them (p. 207).

Postmodernist concerns that P4C's commitment to Western rationality will colonize children's minds is also responded to quite well in Gregory's (2011) article:

> That construal of rationality misses the point of all those philosophers of politics and science and ethics who have shown us that what's important and efficacious about rationality is not, or not *only* certain logical structures, but a family of social and ethical practices like curiosity about alternative views, freedom of expression, accountability to peers, non-dogmatism, and self-correction... (p. 209)

The necessity to plumb, juggle and tease out rationality without "aggressive rationalism" is captured by Freire (2004) as well when he ties critical thinking and reason into a rigorous method of both affirming and questioning knowledge: "Intelligence about the world, *which is as much apprehended as it is produced*, and the communicability of that intelligence are tasks for the subject, who in the process, must become more and more critically capable" (p. 5, emphasis mine). With the merger of critical thinking and rationality, then, a Freirean critical pedagogy advances consciousness-raising through humanizing education that imbues learners with the critical tools (and reasonableness) necessary to expose the systemic, root causes of oppression (Grace & Wells, 2007). Rationality undergoes a robust deconstruction in Chapter 7; for now we will prepare for a train ride with a postmodernist tour guide.

Postmodern Metamodernism

The notion of *oscillation* has dominated much of my philosophical analysis over the last several years. For instance, as I claimed in Chapter 4, queer/critical pedagogy encapsulates the oscillation of dissolving and re-materializing subjectivities, the ebb and flow of identities, the mobility of discourse over myriad terrains and obstacles. Indeed, it seems to me that our very *being* is a nexus of contradictions and dislocations. Jean-Paul Sartre argues that authentic

existence requires keeping our facticity and transcendence—our existential modal poles as "things" and "possibilities," respectively—in constant, coordinated oscillation, lest we fall into bad faith or a "lie to oneself" that we can "neither reject nor comprehend" (Sartre, 1943/2001, pp. 330-333). My assertion is that in a postmodernist structure of feeling, all such existential dislocations are to be held in continuous, conscious suspension and, as I will clarify later in this book, bad faith can be circumvented through another precarious existential anomaly, what Critchley (2012) calls *supreme fiction*. It is supreme fiction, "a fiction that we know to be a fiction—there being nothing else—but in which we nevertheless believe" (p. 91), that offers a response, if not a solution *per se*, to the problem of the universal that undergirds postmodernism and extends its tendrils into P4C.

This section focuses, though, on Vermeulen and van den Akker's (2010) conception of *metamodernism,* which they claim "is characterized by the oscillation between a typically modern commitment and a markedly postmodern detachment" (p. 2). I will assert that this oscillation "between a modern enthusiasm and a postmodern irony, between hope and melancholy, between naïveté and knowingness, empathy and apathy, unity and plurality, totality and fragmentation, purity and ambiguity" (pp. 5-6), an oscillation the authors claim is the metamodern negotiation between the modern and postmodern, is actually inscribed in postmodernism itself. I also argue that the oscillation is *evanescent,* Sartre's word for a "phenomenon which exists only in and through its own differentiation" (p. 331), which renders Vermeulen and van den Akker's metaphor of the pendulum inaccurate, particularly when contrasted with their insightful "both-neither" dynamic.

The both-neither dynamic is well captured by Vermeulen and van den Akker (2010) when they write that metamodernists "express [an] (often guarded) hopefulness and (at times

feigned) sincerity" (p. 2). However, their pendulum metaphor is misleading, as they claim that "each time the metamodern enthusiasm swings toward fanaticism, gravity pulls it back toward irony; the moment its irony sways toward apathy, gravity pulls it back toward enthusiasm" (p. 6). This image eschews the simultaneity of the both-neither dynamic, a dynamic that espouses an *ironic enthusiasm* and *enthusiastic irony*, which is to say that metamodernism (what I call postmodernism) is both/neither enthusiastic and/nor ironic. Postmodernism is, then, melancholically hopeful and optimistically cynical, sharply cognizant of its naïveté, pluralistically unified and totally fractured, and so on. Furthermore, the authors describe postmodernism as apathetic, which I dispute. Cynicism and suspicion are not to be conflated with indifference. As a posture and style—a structure of feeling—postmodernism is passionately guarded and warily fervid. Cultivating and internalizing a powerful "hegemony detector," a postmodernist has a keen eye for shackles and a delicate, cautious approach to emancipation so as not to inadvertently install new chains under the guise of freedom; one who carries a haughty epistemology-annihilator—who asserts the impossibility of transcendent emancipation while eschewing its concomitant necessity—is not a postmodernist but, quite simply, a malcontent and an obstacle to the mitigation of human suffering. A further discussion of the "impossible necessity" of emancipation and the aporia of justice will be entertained in the next chapter.

By now you must be wondering what reasons I have to claim that metamodernism is simply misrecognized postmodernism. This discussion will entail a closer look at Sartre's (1943/2001) *evanescence* and my own *philosophical parallax.* In *Being and Nothingness,* Sartre describes bad faith as self-deception, where the deceiver and the deceived are one and the same. In the following passage, he delineates the paradoxical, self-implosive nature of such a lie:

> We must agree in fact that if I deliberately and cynically attempt to lie to myself, I fail completely in this undertaking; the lie falls back and collapses beneath my look; it is ruined *from behind* by the very consciousness of lying to myself which pitilessly constitutes itself well within my project as its very condition. We have here an *evanescent* phenomenon which exists only in and through its own differentiation. (p. 331, emphasis his)

My intention here is not to suggest that postmodernism and bad faith are similar in content. Instead, they share an evanescent structure, and recognition of this isomorphism requires a prior apprehension of philosophical parallax.

Parallax

Imagine you are a passenger on a speeding train, watching the scenery through the window. The shrubs along the tracks appear to move very quickly, reduced almost to a blur, and it is difficult, even nauseating, to sweep your gaze to keep up with their passing. Behind them, a grove of trees whistles by with a more moderate cadence. From this perspective, the sense of speed endures but each tree does not evade your focus as does each shrub and pebble only a few meters beyond the tracks. Finally, several kilometers in the distance, almost ethereal in its hazy stubbornness, a range of tall mountains sits seemingly motionless. You return to your novel for a few minutes before looking out again to find the mountains have passed by, confirming that they, too, are susceptible to your locomotion. No matter your focus—whether the shrubs, the forest, or the mountains—the train moves relative to each at precisely the same pace. Your intellect is well aware of this fact, and yet the untrained eye would have you believe otherwise. This phenomenon is known as parallax.

Now imagine that you paint the windows in your carriage an opaque black, save for a small peephole. You install an air-ride seat in front of the opening and stuff industrial-grade plugs into your ears. Peeking through the hole, you adjust the height of the seat so all you can see is the mountains and sky in the distance. Focussing your gaze on the mountain range—or perhaps beyond, into the blue expanse of the heavens, into the realm of God, of the Absolute—with the air ride seat disguising the movement of the train and the earplugs muffling the sound of metal on metal, you attempt to convince yourself you are motionless. Your project is one of bad faith. In its evanescence, the structure of bad faith materializes when, and only when, the relationship between its constituent modalities (i.e., parallax) is disavowed or intentionally concealed, when the *here* of the train and the *there* of the mountains, the perceived immediacy of facticity and latency of transcendence, are differentiated according to a falsehood.

Allowing the metaphor to fully coalesce, imagine now you are on the train of life, hurdling through space-time toward an inevitable but as-yet-uncharted cliff. Whizzing by next to the tracks is the world of the concrete and visceral—fleeting, ecstatic experiences of love and loss, pleasure and pain, nostalgia and regret, longing and gratification. The individual mountains in the distance encapsulate abstract concepts such as "modernism," "postmodernism," and "metamodernism," among myriad others, while the assembled mountain ranges represent *elevator words* (Hacking, 1999) like *growth* and *knowledge*. Here the both-neither dynamic of postmodernism reveals itself; "postmodernism" sits atop a mountain peak, remote and hazy, yet tractable and apprehensible as a distant abstraction with an almost stationary, even foundational, appeal. *There it is! There's postmodernism!...* Where?... *There! Third mountain from the right...* I see it! It has made itself available as our focus of discussion, comprehension and analysis despite the rapid movement of the train we are on. Thank you, parallax!

Conceptually, postmodernism exists only in the distance, as a mountain in the range of abstraction, where, upon inspection, it is revealed as something other than itself. Postmodernism in the *existential* sense, though, maintains an evanescent relationship to its rocky namesake. It describes my posture, style, and affective constitution as I apprehend the illusion that is parallax. It pervades the mentality through which I recognize that the mountains whoosh past with precisely the same ferocity as the shrubs, that soon Postmodern Peak will be out of sight, leaving me to seek out a new foundation with which to ground myself. Metamodern Mountain, Romantic Rock, whatever it may be, it has little bearing on my grasp of parallax, of the radical contingency—the illusion—of the disparity between the concrete and the abstract, the factical and the transcendent. Postmodernism is embodied here on the train, it is out there in the distant cascades, and it is neither here nor there. All of which we can be certain is that the train barrels toward an unseen cliff, and parallax is the name of the game as we seek to make sense of the world that passes us by.

Evanescence

To further conceptualize postmodernism as evanescent—as the posture with which it apprehends its flux—and to demonstrate the redundancy of metamodernism, I wish to present a visual model, known by scientists and mathematicians as the split-phase sine wave (Figure 5.1), where for our purposes the x-axis represents the forward movement of time and the y-axis represents "structure of feeling." In this example, let us say the green wave demonstrates the up-and-down oscillation of enthusiasm—an ostensibly modernist emotional state—while the red wave illustrates the oscillation of irony, a postmodernist affective mode. The blue horizontal line through the centre represents the net effect, the destructive interference pattern—the

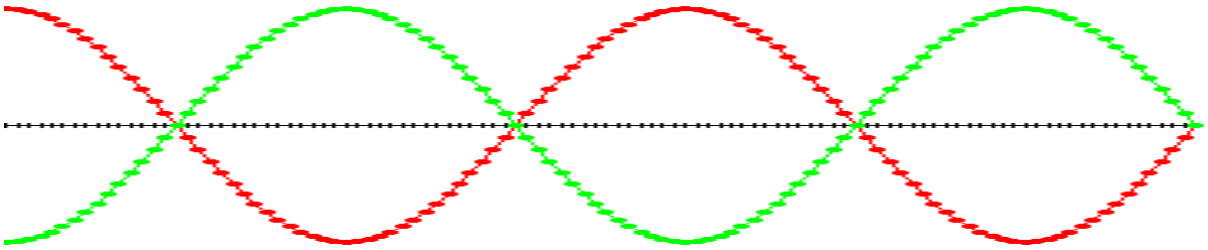

Figure 5.1 – Split-phase sine wave as structure of feeling

state of mind. This model captures the both-neither dynamic of Vermeulen and van den Akker (2010) better than their metaphor of the pendulum, for the postmodern posture, as the embodied accumulation of the contradictory effects of enthusiasm and irony, hope and melancholy, purity and ambiguity, *et cetera*, is always simultaneously both and neither construct. Furthermore, this figure exhibits philosophical parallax; the blue horizontal line exists on a reified plane distanced from the abstract affective-intellectual mode of the oscillating waves. The horizontal line is me or you, the embodiment of postmodernism sitting on the train, while the oscillating waves are *out there*, perhaps in the forest or the foothills, yet also *internalized* here, on the train. The model itself? "Postmodernism?" It is even more distant; it is in the mountains, where we can point and talk about it with ease. Figure 1, then, models postmodernism and its own understanding of philosophical parallax, within which it is evanescently contained.

Of course, this model is somewhat misleading, as it gives a false sense of balance, equilibrium and harmony. Life in the postmodern condition and otherwise is not reducible to a neat little split-phase sine wave. This representation might better capture the messiness of being if we were to add a third dimension, pasting the figure onto a bumpy existential topography of life's "ups and downs," a terrain that unsettles the model's clean contours and symmetry. Nevertheless, I hope I have made a strong case that postmodernism is already "meta"—it is recursive—and similar to after-queer, metamodernism may present a superfluous conceptual

derailment of unnecessary categorical fissures. Still, Vermeulen and van den Akker's (2010) conception of metamodernism, if only a "metastasized postmodernism," is revolutionary and insightful. Further, I should acknowledge that the authors draw not only from academic literature and current affairs but from contemporary art and aesthetics in their analysis, adding a historical and conceptual layer that my examination lacks. Their aesthetical appraisal, then, may reveal a distinction between postmodernism and metamodernism that my existential analysis does not.

The project of accurately conceptualizing postmodernism is necessary not only to challenge so-called postmodernist critique of P4C but also to show that P4C is, and ought to be, postmodernist pedagogy. The epistemological and ethical friction exposed by, and contained within, postmodernism has not yet been comprehensively explored in this manuscript, however. Postmodernism also holds the tension of the universal; it recognizes that each time we fall into the normative—each time we use the thrust of *all, absolutely,* or *always* in humanitarian discourse—we have instantiated a metaphysical paradox, a self-contradiction (and a gash that is deepened by the use of the prefix "each time"). This structural implosion plagues even the most seemingly innocuous of prescriptive ethics, such as "universal human rights" or "universal access to education," let alone particular pedagogical strategies. Accordingly, the next chapter will address the holography of the universal and the postmodern emancipatory paradox *we cannot but we must.*

Chapter 6 – Do You See What I See?

There are no bad ideas, only great ideas that go *horribly* wrong.
(Jack Donaghy, NBC's "30 Rock")

The central quandary that will propel this chapter is expressed well by Sharon Todd (2009) as "a pressing problem for philosophy of education and for the political orientation of education more generally, namely the question and status of the universal for addressing injustices" (p. 18). I concur with Todd that universalism and so-called anti-universalism tend to surface as a problematic binary in the literature, much as I see the related concepts of modernism and postmodernism often approached unhelpfully with a polarizing brush. My focus on the structure and utility of the universal will inform my exploration of two related issues—the role of the responsible educator, and the sense of practical paralysis that seems to accompany the internalization of central tenets of postmodernism. A guiding theme that I will thread through this chapter is that of *translation*, not so much linguistic but cultural and material. The phenomenological fabric of translation, I will show, instigates a vicious circular logic of the universal, which corresponds with the paralysis noted above.

Drawing from postmodernism and wrestling with the tensions woven into the paradox of universalism, I will defend my view that educators and educational researchers have a responsibility to actively engage with the tensions and frustrations of philosophical problems. Accordingly, I will argue for the importance of the indefinite suspension of truth, via constant dissensus and dialogue, and for cognizance of the aporetic structure of justice, of that which parallels Simon Critchley's (2012) *supreme fiction.* I will conclude not by offering a prescription for the forms and methods of activism that should inhere in educational research but by suggesting what sorts of ethical imperatives might be cultivated by, and eventually assimilated into the conscience of, a responsible researcher. Accordingly, this chapter premises a

philosophically sensitive, tentative qualification of my recommendation to enact P4C in schools across Canada.

Translation as Universal as Translation as Universal...

Norwood Russell Hanson (1958) offers an extensive, if convoluted, examination of the theory-laden nature of perception. An analogous hypothetical problem to the central one he poses would be whether you and I "see the same thing" when we watch a magic trick. This thought experiment progresses more clearly under the assumption that you know precisely how the trick is carried out, while I am completely dumbfounded (*how on Earth did she survive being cut in half?!*). Do we see the same thing? Well, we both receive the same photonic sense data, if from slightly different physical perspectives. But while you see a clever optical illusion, I see a woman being severed in two, smiling all the while. Clearly, we do not see the same thing. Similarly, Karl Popper (1994) purports that "there is no such thing as an uninterpreted observation, an observation which is not theory-impregnated" (p. 58). I think, though, that Maurice Merleau-Ponty best expresses this line of thought with his *preobjective,* which is central to his critique of empiricism. Csordas (1990) eloquently relays Merleau-Ponty's argument, claiming that perception is indeterminate by nature, that there are no objects prior to perception, and that perception instead begins in the body and ends in objects. This reversal requires a new concept, the preobjective—a destabilization of the subject-object distinction—in order to study the embodied process of perception: "If our perception 'ends in objects', the goal ... is to capture the moment in which perception begins, and, in the midst of arbitrariness and indeterminacy, constitutes and is constituted by culture" (Csordas, p. 9).

I find Merleau-Ponty's appraisal very compelling, an appraisal I would render to suggest that all observations are intrinsically acts of translation. The word *translation* derives from the

Latin *translatio*, or "to bring across." This fits with my interpretation of perception as the modal translation of sensory stimuli into cognitive structures, an act of translation that is theory- and culture-laden, yes, but more importantly, as unique as the embodied mind that carries it out. As Todd (2009) argues, "Many critics of universalism are not simplistically derisive of universality, but point to the ways in which claims to universality operate in and through particular logical systems, linguistic contexts, discourses and cultures" (p. 20), and I would wish to explicitly add to the list "particular minds and bodies." Following the theoretical foundations of Pierre Bourdieu's *habitus*, I regard culture as a construct that is, in some sense, objectively embedded in individual subjects. This is an important claim that complements Todd's interpretation that culture is also, more abstractly, "an exchange of practices and languages [and] ... not some simplistic ruse conjured up by relativists to frustrate universalists, but the very cloth from which universal claims are tailored" (p. 20).

Drawing on Judith Butler's analysis of universality centred around its ontological grounding in cultural translation, Todd (2009) sketches out the self-negating structure of universality: "In the name of seeking to rise above the particular in order to name what is common to all, universality paradoxically destroys what it purports to include," thus wedding universality and anti-universalism into a nexus of contradiction (p. 20). Todd channels Butler's assertion that all universalist claims are embedded in language and culture, and thus, as I have argued above, these claims entail interpretive conversions via embodied perceptions of materiality. She claims further that universality is unintelligible "without an on-going struggle to translate its meaning and significance into those very particular situations it claims to be accounting for" (p. 21). I find this analysis deeply compelling, as it captures the deep subjectivity inherent in all articulations of the universal (though not without adding another layer of

complexity with a totalizing statement about universals and their translational nature). Indeed, as Pendlebury and Enslin (2001) contend, "there is no view from nowhere, no Archimedean point from which to approach research into people's practices" (p. 363). This philosophical primer, however, does not prevent them from defending a universalist conception of ethics in educational research, nor does it hinder Enslin and Tjiattas (2009b) from attempting a qualified universalism with respect to access to education. I will endeavour to show why both attempts are inadequate, but first I will outline the merits of dialogue—a central principle of P4C—as a method for mitigating the paradox of the universal.

The Suspension Bridge of Dissensus and Dialogue

A common proposal forwarded by scholars in negotiating the tensions between the universal and particular—often under the heading of cosmopolitanism—is the continuous, conscious exercise of dialogue in order to arrive at new forms of understanding. Sharon Todd (2010), for instance, proposes an *agonistic cosmopolitics* as a critical political framework for approaching cosmopolitanism. Todd insists that all participants in any policy debate, provided they come to the table with a conflictual consensus regarding the necessity of equality and freedom, should be regarded as legitimate adversaries who have the right to a political struggle to define the contents of liberty for themselves. This, of course, challenges us to inclusively conceptualize "equality and freedom" prior to or while engaging in a particular debate, and this is a major hurdle indeed. No doubt, in Todd's framework, these conceptualizations would evolve over time through a nascent process of the agonistic cosmopolitics that she prescribes.

Moreover, Todd (2010) argues that attempts to arrive at agreement or consensus negate the pluralism and diversity upon which our notions of democracy are founded:

> Learning to live better together requires facing the very difficulties embedded in that living, where not everyone's voice sings to the same tune. This is definitely not to suggest that facing pluralism is *only* difficult, but merely that the contentiousness that inevitably arises out of different worldviews requires an approach that takes these views seriously. Otherwise we risk, in the name of high-handed principles, silencing those very voices that provide counterpoint and texture to the score of our interactions. (p. 227)

In the context of P4C, this call for epistemological pluralism entails the age-old affirming stance that "there are no stupid questions," and, to a certain extent, "there are no wrong answers." As Ruitenberg reminds us, however, pluralism is not the same as relativism, and judgments are different from preferences (2007, p. 56), which is to say certain values must be rejected, or at least resisted, in the name of ethical co-existence. Pineda (2009) delineates his criteria for distinguishing between good and less good reasons for our judgments—including explanatory and justificatory power, timeliness, prudence, and coherence (pp. 327-328)—while Bleazby (2011) argues that all ideas are subject to comparison with a quasi-objective sociocultural extra-mental reality. In P4C, this cross-checking is not the responsibility of any one individual—not even the teacher—but instead it is a communal process that cultivates epistemological efficacy by accounting for multiple perspectives (p. 460).

A call for legitimate dialogue is espoused by Michael Crossley's (2008) "bridging" thesis as well. Focussing on comparative education and the social sciences more generally, Crossley argues that

> much can still be gained from a more effective bridging across paradigmatic and disciplinary boundaries; and between theoretical and applied studies; policy and practice; micro, macro and other levels of analysis; specialist and mainstream research traditions;

> studies of the past and those of the present; the humanities and the social sciences; and research in the North and the South (p. 325).

Crossley wishes, then, to see a collapsing of binaries and otherwise seemingly disparate research entities, much as I have suggested above in terms of (post)modernism and (anti-)universalism. Furthermore, his bridging thesis blurs paradigmatic boundaries but, in agreement with Todd (2010), eschews consensus. Instead, "it prioritizes and values the ongoing creativity and originality that the juxtaposition of different world views may generate—as well as an improved awareness of the implications of cultural and contextual differences" (p. 331).

Still, while Crossley's advocacy of debate, dissensus and context are a step in the right direction, I feel the late Karl Popper (1994) moves us into a more philosophically sensitive appeal to dialogue. While rebuffing the irrationalism of Kuhn's "incommensurability" thesis of divergent scientific paradigms and rejecting the relativism entailed by Kuhn's thesis and by caricatures of postmodernism, Popper reveals himself as a postmodernist according to the "archetype" I sketched out in Chapter 5. No doubt many self-proclaimed postmodernists would find their positions "incommensurable" with Popper's, as the latter scholar subtitles his (1994) book "In defence of science and rationality." If postmodernism is incredulous toward such metanarratives, how can Popper be a postmodernist? Again, I wish to emphasize that incredulity is not rejection. Popper indeed buys into "the growth of knowledge" while at the same time describing himself as "an almost orthodox adherent of unorthodoxy" (p. 34). I interpret this, in light of the arguments Popper develops throughout the book, as a strictly qualified subscription to the metanarrative of epistemological progress, a subscription that recognizes such growth as epiphenomenal, premised on the primacy of disagreement, discussion and mutual criticism. I am confident that Popper would have been a keen advocate of P4C.

Perhaps, then, Popper espouses a social constructivist model of knowledge, except that he demonstrates a profound sensitivity to the flux and particularity of the very conceptualizations of *growth* and *knowledge,* of what Hacking calls *elevator words* for their abstract qualities (1999, pp. 22-23). This sensitivity and reflexivity I believe moves Popper (1994) beyond constructivism into the realm of postmodernism. His postmodernist lens reveals itself further in his thirst for understanding rather than agreement, as the latter is, at best, uninteresting (p. 35), at worst, fallacious (p. 37) and oppressive (p. 51), a perspective that aligns well with Sharon Todd's (2010) agonistic cosmopolitics. For Popper, understanding is an ongoing process of critical dialogue (which he uses interchangeably with rational discussion) and self-conscious reflection, whereby "truth" is held in constant suspension. Plus, he is bitingly critical of Occidentalism—purporting "indoctrination with Western ideas" and "training in Western verbosity and some Western ideology" as greater obstacles to critical dialogue than disparities in culture or language (p. 51). What I most admire in Popper, though, is his ability to engage with paradox and philosophical parallax, or the complex, sometimes dizzying relations of concepts at various levels of abstraction. It is these sorts of intellectual headaches to which I now turn my attention.

Irony, Aporia & Supreme Fiction

We have now explored critical dialogue, dissensus and the bridging of paradigms as potential, if only partial, solutions to cosmopolitan conundrums. In my view, these frameworks are of limited utility, however, because they fail to engage adequately with the deep philosophical issues that arise in any exercise of universalism, issues that might be encapsulated by the phrase *impossible and yet necessary.* Namely, the roadmaps of others I have sketched out above tend to focus on the normative gravity, without engaging with the *analytic a priori*

impossibility, of universalism. Enslin and Tjiattas (2009b) display a particularly salient example of philosophical agnosticism; in their rejoinder to Todd (2009), they admit:

> Our paper does not go into the philosophical foundations of universalism.... For our purposes it does not matter if universalist principles are inductively arrived at after immersion in different cultures, or accepted as self-evident, or as constituting the content of a global overlapping consensus. We are merely concerned to show that such principles are necessary for global justice... (p. 24)

Paraphrased: *don't tell me we can't, for we clearly must.* On the face of it, this is an admirable position to take. And yet, I insist that to eschew the translational paradox highlighted by Todd (2009) necessarily puts research into the very trajectory of oppression and colonialism that Enslin and Tjiattas (and Pendlebury & Enslin, 2001) seek to avoid. Quite simply, I contend that to take anything for granted when speaking for others is to oppress, no matter how benevolent one's intentions. Enslin and Tjiattas are adept to suggest that this mantra might "pose the danger of paralysis" (p. 27). To ignore the paradox, however, I contend would not be to commit a "politically incorrect misdemeanor" as they claim (p. 27), but a self-defeating error of irrationality. Indeed, postmodern literature often seems to commit a similar error, namely emphasizing the *impossible* while ignoring the *necessity.* This is a common charge leveraged against postcolonial theorists by neo-Marxists as well (see Sankaran, 2009): there *are* widespread material inequalities and gross injustices—famine, tyranny, war—and no matter how much we are ethically or philosophically restricted in naming these conditions, no matter their material translational contingency, they are, in some deep sense, very real and need to be actively, physically addressed.

I cannot disagree. I entered my master's program with a mentality of activism, looking to improve the lives of sexual and gender minority youth by tackling systemic inequality and under-recognition. Having had my eyes opened to the (post)structural, ethical challenges and contradictions built into this sort of work has not made the marginalization and victimization of this population any less real, nor has it diminished my resolve to make these kids' lives better. What these philosophical realizations have done, however, is to create a great deal more mental and emotional work for me as I endeavour to inform policy that speaks in generalities for an aggregate of particular individuals. Working with a postmodernist lens can be a real headache, as it brings with it a great deal of self-doubt, suspicion and, at times, hopelessness. The solution for me, if you can call it that, is to live in a sort of revolt (Camus, 1942/2005), actively keeping the contradictions in my consciousness as I conduct my research and, more generally, as I engage with the world. This revolt, as we will see, involves embracing Jacques Derrida's *aporia,* Richard Rorty's *irony,* and Simon Critchley's *supreme fiction.*

The notion of philosophical parallax that I discussed earlier is well instantiated in the simultaneous normative gravity of the abstract universal and its concrete, structural holography:

> There is no givenness to, or intelligibility of, universality without an on-going struggle to translate its meaning and significance into those very particular situations it claims to be accounting for. This has a significant bearing upon how we think about the work to be done on a global stage, where universal appeals to rights and justice are often assumed to be transparently applicable to local contexts. (Todd, 2009, p. 21)

Due to this radical contingency of "universal values" like justice and humanism, I wish to apply Derrida's notion of the *aporia* of justice, which ties conceptually quite neatly with the "not yet" of Butler (the latter as cited by Todd, 2009, p. 22). Friedrich, Jaastad and Popkewitz (2010)

engage with Derrida's *aporia* of justice and the (im)possibility of democratic education. The authors interpret Derrida as follows: "[Democracy] lies in the opening of the space to experience the *aporia* of justice, of deciding on the undecidable allowing for an experience of the impossible and the attribution of responsibility in terms of an ethic of 'affirmative openness to the other prior to questioning'" (p. 583). Thus, due to the "universality" of translation that I defended above, democracy and justice will never come, as their meanings and particular instantiations are constantly in flux. Once we capture and name them, they become something else, something domineering and self-destructive. To quote Todd (2009) again: "This is, then, a universality forever dissatisfied with itself, forever restless in its search for meaning, and it lives only at the very limits of its own articulation" (p. 22).

Todd finds great utility in this aporia: "I find this 'not yet' quality of the universal to be precisely what propels us forward, giving us hope to do more, to do better, to do otherwise" (2009, p. 22). I agree, and I think it is helpful to further reify the notion of the "not yet;" two scholars in particular have, in a self-conscious sense, "operationalized" the aporia in a very useful way. Ian Hacking (1999) describes six grades of constructionist commitment, one of which he borrows from Richard Rorty: "Irony about *X* is the recognition that *X* is highly contingent, the product of social history and forces, and yet something we cannot, in our present lives, avoid treating as part of the universe in which we interact with other people, the material world, and ourselves" (p. 20). In this case, we can imagine that *X* is universalism. Rorty's *ironist* also recognizes the contingency of our vocabularies, and thus, I argue, the ubiquity of translation from the seemingly most universal concept all the way down to its necessarily particular momentary manifestations. Nonetheless, our contingent vocabularies are all we have and so long as we consciously maintain a sense of irony while we work with them, we can be said to

maintain a sense of authenticity. To do otherwise—to recognize only the contingency or only the reality—would render us impotent or vaguely totalitarian, respectively. Either way, such ignorance would embody a project of bad faith.

In a similar vein, Simon Critchley (2012) develops his formulation of *fictional force* as precisely the response (if not the solution, *per se*) to self-contradictory riddles of politics, which I see as isomorphic with our paradox of universalism. For Critchley, due to the contradictions that comprise them, politics, law and religion (and, by extension, universals) are all fictions, albeit necessary ones. Accordingly, he posits a crucial distinction between fiction and *supreme fiction*, thus fighting contradiction with contradiction: "Paradoxically, a supreme fiction is a fiction that we know to be a fiction—there being nothing else—but in which we nevertheless believe. A supreme fiction is one self-conscious of its radical contingency" (p. 91). In a sense, then, if we follow these philosophical prescriptions, we are never allowed the comfort of getting off the epistemic treadmill. What other choice do we have? Indeed, writing about metamodernism—which, as I argued in Chapter 5 is more accurately "true" postmodernism while the postmodernism they refer to is an apathetic caricature—Vermeulen and van den Akker (2010) assert with great charm that

> metamodernism moves for the sake of moving, attempts in spite of its inevitable failure; it seeks forever for a truth that it never expects to find. If you will forgive us for the banality of the metaphor for a moment, the metamodern thus willfully adopts a kind of donkey-and-carrot double-bind. Like a donkey it chases a carrot that it never manages to eat because the carrot is always just beyond its reach. But precisely because it never manages to eat the carrot, it never ends its chase, setting foot in moral realms the modern donkey (having eaten its carrot elsewhere) will never encounter, entering political

domains the postmodern donkey (having abandoned the chase) will never come across. (p. 5)

There is a further caveat to all of this, which Popper (1994) illustrates nicely. Popper warns that frameworks, vocabularies and theories can become "mental prisons" if we become myopically addicted to any one of them (p. 52). The process of dialogue, of critically engaging with other ideas, is purported to be a method for avoiding incarceration in one such prison, a method we have seen put forward by Todd, Crossley and others. But Popper illuminates the philosophical parallax—the messiness of "abstract reification/concrete abstraction," if you will—built into his prescription: "It is only too obvious that this idea of self-liberation, of breaking out of one's prison of the moment, might in its turn become part of a framework or a prison—or in other words, that we can never be absolutely free" (p. 53). Indeed, the postmodernist lens for which I advocate, or similarly Popper's self-described "almost orthodox adherence of unorthodoxy," might be one such prison. But, as Popper suggests, the best we can do, then, is to widen our prison and wilfully overcome the parochialism that we know has such potential for harm.

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Building on the phenomenologically foundational element of translation, I defend a sort of perspectivism that pervades all sociological arenas of abstraction, from individual embodied perceptions of material objects, through to ideas, all the way up to universalist, circularly defined elevator words. This particularism undermines the logical grounds for all universals, even those centred around basic, visceral phenomena like "suffering" and "happiness." It is not just that these words necessarily mean different things to different people; the key here, I believe, is to recognize the distinctiveness of even the most basically conceptualized experiences on an

individual level, as this ensures a constant reflexivity and healthy skepticism about all claims made in the name of others. This does not mean that we should not intervene when obvious forms of cruelty and injustice are happening before our eyes, crimes against humanity that would be difficult, if not impossible, to defend through any form of critical dialogue. Female genital mutilation, the violent criminalization of homosexuality, child soldiers, the list goes on; to relegate these occurrences to the realm of armchair discourse analysis seems a great injustice in itself. And yet...

Enslin and Tjiattas (2009b) develop a "qualified universalism" in their defense of universal access to basic education. I do not wish here to cast judgment about the practical conclusions reached in their article; for all I know, their recommendations would have immense net benefit for the common good of humanity (and admittedly I have more than one utilitarian bone in my body). But I do feel that the authors' self-proclaimed philosophical agnosticism, which manifests as a "self-evident" call for universal education, is irresponsible. It appears these authors have locked themselves in a mental prison, and a healthy dose of irony—an appreciation for the supremely fictive essence of universalism—would engender a greater appreciation for the potential neocolonialism espoused by their universalist claims. Enslin and Tjiattas, and Pendlebury and Enslin (2001), have been compelled by Martha Nussbaum's talk of universal capacities of agency and choice. What they all seem not to recognize, however, is that to introduce certain alternatives can, in actuality, preclude all choice. Neoliberal forms of education, with their tantalizing if overblown promises of prosperity and empowerment, might be all but impossible to turn down for, say, a peasant child in India. But an exodus from rural areas to urban centres can spell the death of indigenous knowledge systems and create a population of educated, unemployed young adults who lack the basic skills to return to the

simple but fruitful lives of subsistence farming they otherwise would have had (Morarji, 2010). Universal education may be an inadvertent call for universal exploitation. Or perhaps not. Or perhaps both yes and no. Regardless, these are the contingencies that I believe are more readily interrogated via a postmodernist lens, and thus ethical researchers have an epistemic responsibility (Code, 1987) to know better than to gamble all their chips on universalist ideals without hedging their bets.

What does all of this mean for pedagogical practice? The paradox of the universal imbues P4C with internal friction, a sort of chronic anxiety that ethical prudence requires us to carry and live with. An appreciation of the holography of the universal demands that I acknowledge my policy prescription as radically contingent, as tentative, as both and neither irresponsible and/nor prudent, as (im)possibly (un)ethical. P4C *is* a White, Western concoction rooted in modernism, a fact that cannot be ignored, particularly given our nation's enduring colonial legacy against Aboriginal peoples. As a pedagogical ideal, it will not—*cannot*—translate into any teaching context without some degree of infidelity, presumptuousness and domination. And yet, the suffering of thousands of Canadian students at the slithering tongues and clenched hands of their peers requires us to experiment with interventions in spite of the asymptotic nature of consummate ethics. To do otherwise would be irrational. This call for experimentation—with supreme fiction and the aporia of justice—is the topic of focus in Chapter 8, but first I will proffer a postcolonial deconstruction of rationality, the latter being a circular but existentially indispensable construct that holds sway even under the incredulous gaze of postmodernism.

Chapter 7 – A Rational Deconstruction of Rationality

Darmok and Jalad at Tanagra

In the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* episode "Darmok" (Roddenberry, Menosky, Lazebnik & Kolbe, 1991) Captain Picard and the *Enterprise* are on a mission to establish peaceful relations with an alien race known as the Tamarians. Despite the usual success of Star Fleet's "universal translators," previous encounters between the Tamarians and the Federation have ended in utter communicative failure; what the latter crew hears is English but indecipherable. Early in the episode, Picard and a Tamarian captain by the name of Dathon are struggling once again for mutual understanding when suddenly, the two captains are beamed to the surface of a nearby planet, a scheme we later discover was devised by Dathon to facilitate understanding between the two races.

Picard soon has the revelation that the Tamarians speak in metaphor: "Temba, his arms wide;" "Darmok and Jalad at Tanagra;" "Shaka, when the walls fell." The metaphor metastasizes when we and Picard discover Dathon stranded the two men on this planet, near a dangerous creature's lair, in order to re-enact a legendary encounter between two travellers, strangers who overcame their differences to defeat a common enemy at Tanagra. In a tragic twist, Dathon is killed by the creature, but Picard, safely aboard the *Enterprise* once again, manages to diffuse a tense situation with the First Officer of the Tamarian vessel. With grandiose gestures and lush allegory, Picard communicates the success of their mutual mission to establish understanding between the two races and conveys his gratitude for Dathon's sacrifice. For Picard this is a transformative experience, and he later wonders aloud if more familiarity with his own Terran mythology might help him relate better to other cultures he encounters.

I recount this story for two reasons. First, I believe this narrative complements Harrison's (1999) astute analysis of Derrida's "White Mythology." Harrison finds in Derrida a well-articulated attack on "the classical opposition of concept and metaphor" (p. 513), suggesting it was, in this instance, the Tamarians with whom the writers meant for us to empathize. Second, this argument for linguistic relativism builds toward a conception of rationality that is decolonialized, pluralistic, and intersubjective (Quijano, 2007); radically relational (Escobar, 2008); and fundamentally vernacular (Eze, 2008). Borrowing also Escobar's interpretation of "hermeneutics of emergence," we can already begin to see how the encounter between the Federation and the Tamarians might be interpreted as an emergent, rational event, as occurring through a rational synthesis of two previously discrete logical systems (and now hyper-rationalized through an emergent synthesis with my own homunculus).

Why is the deconstruction of rationality such a vital endeavour? Again, I offer two reasons. The first is in order to obliterate a nefarious form of hegemony masquerading as rationality, the self-justifying, consumerist, hyper-competitive rationality of neoliberalism, and the sort of straw-man rationality to which the critics in Gregory (2011) object. This rationality is a normative basis for both entrepreneurialism and developmentalism, and all three terms of the equation are seen as both naturalized and universalized, spun sloppily into the capitalist archetype of two very distinct faces. As I show in greater detail below, this particular universal rationality must, like any other, be myopic, oppressive, and structurally self-annihilating—in a word, it is *irrational.* In Chapter 4, I briefly tied neoliberal individualism in with society's widespread, blind acceptance of incoherent libertarian free will and *causa sui*, privileging entitlement over humility and reactive pity over proactive empathy. Where I contrive more intrigue is in my attempt to reconcile my own subjective subscription to rationality—normally

framed in the negative as an aversion to *irrationality*, whatever that is—with the dubious project of trying to define rationality, with my appreciation for the holographic nature of universality, and a frenetic sensitivity to even inadvertently oppressive discursive practices. It is my hope that this process of arriving at a working conception of rationality is itself reasonable, so defined.

Dominant, Dualistic Modernities and Rational Ontologies

This project of de-/re-constructing rationality begins with a brief examination of what has, allegedly, hitherto been masqueraded as rationality in the Western, colonial tradition. It would be tempting—and perhaps well-advised—to first interrogate the more analytic, syllogistic and psychological versions of rationality, as per *expected utility theory, prospect theory,* risk-aversion analyses*,* "the trolley exercise," and the like. These discussions of logics and utility, though, tend to be framed around context-free thought experiments with odds, wins, losses and other stale manifestations of the modern western paradigm's obsession with universalism that is largely the target of my critique. I will leave Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze to tend to "cold logic" (2008, p. 46) and will instead begin by synthesizing a postcolonial/ anti-colonial critique of "modernity-as-rationality," drawing on the works of Arturo Escobar (2008) and Anibal Quijano (2007).

Quijano's (2007) article is simply titled "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality." It is a peculiar piece, awkwardly translated from Spanish and featuring no citations to other publications, save for two of his own. One could argue it reads as something of a polemical metanarrative, of the very sort that its contents rail against. (This is why I have chosen to categorize it as "anti-colonial" rather than award it the more reflexive "postcolonial" ribbon.) Nevertheless, Quijano proffers an interesting analysis, some of which is paralleled by the postcolonial theorists Escobar (2008) and Eze (2008), as we will see below. One of his more

stand-out claims is the connection he makes, in the title and throughout the text, between modernity and rationality. For him, they are bundled together as a "cultural complex" (p. 171) that is hand-in-glove with political forms of European colonial domination, suggesting that they emerged, perhaps, dialectically (my word choice, not his). Eurocentric dominion was self-rationalizing, then, entailing the accretion of self-affirming meta-knowledge. Quijano proclaims "the current crisis of the European paradigm of rational knowledge" is grounded, problematically, in "knowledge as a product of a subject-object relation" (p. 172). This epistemology grants an "individual and individualist character of the 'subject'" and denies the intersubjective foundation of all knowledge, notions of atomicity that he claims are incompatible with "current research," even if he fails to provide evidence for this claim (p. 172). Bold conjecture notwithstanding, I concur with Quijano that the dualistic subject-object epistemology of traditional Western philosophy is not only flawed but dangerously plugged into alienation:

> Only European culture is rational, it can contain "subjects"—the rest are not rational, they cannot be or harbor "subjects." As a consequence, the other cultures are different in the sense that they are unequal, in fact inferior, by nature.... From that perspective, the relation between European culture and the other cultures was established and has been maintained, as a relation between "subject" and "object." It blocked, therefore, every relation of communication, of interchange of knowledge and of modes of producing knowledge between the cultures, since the paradigm implies that between "subject" and "object" there can be but a relation of externality. Such a mental perspective, enduring as practice for five hundred years, could only have been the product of a relation of coloniality between Europe and the rest of the world. (p. 174)

This is a compelling metanarrative, *prima facie,* as it engulfs the Euro-centric story of universal-progress-as-modernity-as-rationality, but to my mind the former narrative arouses the same suspicions as the latter in its parochial totalization. I am more persuaded by Escobar's (2008) suggestion that we play out the assumption of multiple modernities/colonialities/decolonialities, which aligns better with his (and Quijano's) de-essentialized, pluralistic model of new rationality. For Escobar,

> this means a discursive space in which the idea of a single modernity has been suspended at an ontological level—where Europe has been effectively provincialized, that is, displaced from the center of the historical and epistemic imagination, and where the examination of concrete modernities, symmetrical projects, and decolonial processes can be started in earnest from the perspective of epistemic difference. (p. 131)

It is unclear what he means by "symmetrical projects" but I am drawn to his de-centring paradigm of multiplicity and diversity. While I can hardly escape my own particularity as a white, middle-class, educated Euro-Canadian, neither can I indulge the possibility, even for a moment, that my existential vector of (post)modernism is somehow representative of others', and this perspectivism has great utility. While Quijano (2007) may be charged with failing to acknowledge the implosive structure of the universal, it is still prudent to recognize the rhetorical force of his modernity/rationality complex. Being the multifarious construct that it is, rationality cannot escape the inertia of an appraisal such as Quijano's, for no doubt other (dare I say bitter) anti-colonialists likely espouse similar views of rationality as having been forged and claimed, if not simply pilfered, by Euro-colonialism.

It should be noted that Escobar (2008) does not equate modernity with rationality in the same way Quijano does. But he inducts some form of closure around "dominant modernities,"

with their "fundamentally dualistic, objectivist, and rationalist ontologies" (pp. 131-132). As with Quijano, then, we see in Escobar's work a sort of Occidentalism woven into his conception of what rationality "is," as a construct developed per the Western philosophical tradition of subject-object and other essentialist binaries. And as with Quijano, Escobar inspires a vision for a reconstituted rationality, for how it might emerge as a construct recognized in and through its "essence" as a pluralistic, deeply particular entity that anyone can discover for him-/herself in the day-to-day.

Circular Deconstruction and the Prison of Emancipation

Before we can reconstruct rationality, we must acknowledge its vicious circularity. First, there is a normative universalism built into its very definition as something like an "optimizing strategy," or the "ideal method for thinking and acting." Here again we are dealing with an absolute, a totalization, which, as we have seen, is unintelligible outside of the particular instantiations that shatter it to pieces. Moreover, the project I am attempting—rationally conceptualizing rationality—is painfully tautological. There seems no way around this problem, though it can be mitigated, I believe, through the use of a self-conscious, postmodernist lens that reflects these radical contingencies and keeps them suspended in our psyche.

Speaking of postmodernism and circular logics, Bernard Harrison's (1999) reading of Jacques Derrida shows that naming and analogy—denotation and metaphor—are inextricable, and this has profound implications for any project of abstraction/universalization. Harrison does a commendable job of analyzing Derrida's (1971) essay, "White Mythology," in the context of his understanding of the latter scholar's broad philosophical schema. The decentring project of "White Mythology," Harrison claims, is to illustrate that "metaphysics, far from delivering us from metaphor in the name of reason, practices, in the name of abstraction or generality, a style

of thinking which has merely succeeded in concealing from itself, by exiling metaphor to the margins of its 'official' activity, its own profound metaphoricity" (p. 507). Furthermore, metaphysical abstraction is a fraud and, it would appear, a colonial one: "The mythology which the 'dreary poetry' of metaphysics assembles is, for Derrida, the characteristic mythology of the West, of the whites" (p. 508). The metaphysician, then—in our case, the purveyor of universal rationality—tries in vain to speak from a position outside of language, a perspective that is in principle inaccessible. Also encompassed by this logic is the preclusion of "'an essence'—the meaning of a term, that is—'rigorously independent of that which transports it'" (Harrison, p. 516, quoting Derrida). This brand of anti-essentialist argument has been around for at least a century or two—to my knowledge, since Kierkegaard's assault on Hegelian logic—but Derrida's political project of deconstructing and decentring by invoking the ubiquity of metaphor is deliciously poignant (and his own penchant for narrative and rhetoric brings a certain "Tamarian" appeal to this discussion). Whether we look to Kierkegaard, Derrida, or my mom for the words with which to express the "total irrationality" of universality, I would leverage this basic critique to say that any attempt to posit a universal essence—unless, perhaps, permeated with a self-conscious, qualifying appreciation for one's own radical, temporal, cultural contingency—is at best arrogant and at worst violent.

That said, I have yet to master the art of talking about something without objectifying it. Indeed, the purported project of this chapter, as I hinted earlier in this vignette, appears to reduce me to something of a hypocrite (though, it could be said, postmodernism also precludes such reductionism). To help unpack this conundrum, I would like to return to Karl Popper (1994), who warns that frameworks and theories (or, shall we say, vocabularies) can become "mental prisons" if we become myopically addicted to any one of them. The process of dialogue, of

critically engaging with other ideas, is purported to be a method for avoiding incarceration in any one such prison, with the implication that this process might itself embody rationality. But Popper illuminates the philosophical puzzle built into his prescription when he claims that the project of emancipation might itself become a mental prison, precluding any sort of veridical freedom (p. 53). This is indeed quite a conundrum. Channeling the creative solutions posed by such radically self-conscious or "supremely fictive" (Critchley, 2012) thinkers as Nietzsche, Camus, and Rousseau, I would go so far as to insist that science is not, primarily, a science—it is an art. Now that I have tailored myself a "get out of jail free" card, I will trudge forward with my attempt to rationally reconstruct rationality, borrowing a largely postcolonial lens.

Radical Plurationality

While anticipating the emergence of a quasi-normalizing rationality in this chapter's finale, I have insinuated that any universalizing project is altogether irrational (i.e., *analytic a priori* impossible). I will qualify this anti-universalist assertion in my conclusion, restraining it from sliding into pure relativism, on the basis of certain practical necessities and material confines common to us all. But it is my hope that this overt qualification will be superfluous, as I think it is woven implicitly into Eze's (2008) *vernacular rationality* that I champion as the clear winner in the race to reconstruct reason. But first, back to Quijano.

As I have argued above, Quijano's (2007) essay is not without its self-contradictions. But he does harness the postmodern philosophical inertia of anti-essentialism and qualified totality with his acclaim for alternative epistemologies:

> Outside the "West," virtually in all known cultures, every cosmic vision, every image, all systematic production of knowledge is associated with a perspective of totality. But in those cultures, the perspective of totality in knowledge includes the

> acknowledgement of the heterogeneity of all reality; of the irreducible, contradictory character of the latter; of the legitimacy, i.e., the desirability, of the diverse character of the components of all reality—and therefore, of the social. (p. 177)

This perspectivism is leveraged into a call for "epistemological decolonization," for a new rationality, rooted in intercultural dialogue and the interchange of experiences and meanings, "which may legitimately pretend to some universality" (p. 177). This decoloniality, he insists, has the potential to instill a libratory paradigm which reconstitutes power outside of inequality, exploitation and domination. Quijano's vision for a pluralistic epistemological revolution sounds enticing, though I find his appraisal somewhat lacking. His implication is that rationality is *merely* a discursive entity to be (re-)constructed; he fails to engage with the practical implications of the "meta-rationality" that necessarily informs his perspective and his prosaic logic. Indeed, he seems to be culpable of taking "reason" for granted in much the same way he accuses the Western tradition of doing so, particularly, as I noted above in my introduction of Quijano, when he exploits "current research" (presumably Western) without actually citing any.

It could be said that Quijano fails to adequately *de*construct rationality, while Escobar (2008) argues that postfoundationalism falls into the trap of a "hermeneutics of cynicism" (p. 130), which closely parallels the tautological conundrum I outlined in the previous section. "While very interesting in what they do, these [Anglo-Saxon postmodern] works fail to *re*construct our understanding of the categories to which they refer: development, the state, modernity, capitalism, and so forth" (p. 130, emphasis mine). Alternatively, he borrows the notion of "hermeneutics of emergence," which "involves a renewal of our efforts to theorize difference, and the investigating of those experiences where difference is mobilized politically to

subvert hegemonies in ways that might contribute to constructing worlds and knowledges otherwise" (p. 130).

I feel the notion of emergence is vital here, as it captures the chaotic interplay of current dominant rationalities—of what rationality "is"—with what it could "become" through a prescient, rational anticipation of itself. Prophesying what this might look like, Escobar quotes environmental activist Larry Lohmann, who claims "we need to call standard rationality, common sense, and pervasive dualisms into question through 'a performance art requiring practice, experience, intuition, flexibility, improvisation, sensitivity to historical and political circumstances, a sense of what lies over the horizon, and the ability to handle unforeseen consequences'" (p. 133). Moreover, Escobar asserts that the multiplicity of extant indigenous movements, with their "deeply relational ontologies" are "more prepared than the Euro-modern ontologies to live in a pluriverse—indeed, they inhabit a pluriverse, often against all odds" (p. 131). An echo of the bold statement put forward by Busquets (2010) that "indigenous peoples are the moral reserve of humanity" (p. 155), the subtext of Escobar's essay suggests they might comprise the rational reserve as well.

Eze's (2008) lengthy posthumous monograph breaks down rationality and reconstructs it via juxtaposition with various colonial and postcolonial conceptions. This approach manifests the emergent rationality-as-pluralism-as-rationality (or "plurationality," if you will) that I alluded to above. Keeping stride with the holographic structure of universality, Eze takes issue with traditional philosophy, "where it is presupposed that rationality is something you could abstractly derive from outside of social or everyday experience, and then apply the abstractions to that experience" (p. 10). The philosophical parallax between universal/particular and the metaphoricity that destabilizes any particular concept are bundled and harnessed by Eze as a

"generative absence" or what he calls a *breach in tongue.* This breach is "an indication of moments of an epistemic gap in everyday linguistic perception. But this is a productive gap. It is a generative absence absolutely necessary for the autonomous (that is, not causally determined) emergence of thought. This emergence can be called freedom of thought or the freedom of mind" (p. 9). This autonomy-enabling gap for Eze is wedded with diversity, without which there is no thought (p. 3), and also with rationality.

Accordingly, Eze (2008) paints a picture of the benign, ordinary day-to-day-ness of rationality, what he calls *reason in experience* or *vernacular rationality.* This conception heeds Escobar's call "to transform not only the contents of theory, but also its very form" and to engage with questions beyond epistemology, in the realm of ontological commitments (2008, p. 132). Eze claims this re-imagination entails that

> a problem which was previously understood as an epistemic problem regarding the limits of what can be known has become an important marker of a different kind of act of recognition: it marks the point of origin of moral and ethical freedom of thought. ... In what I have called a breach in tongue, for example, there is that idea of the limit or of gap precisely because of the non-coincidence of rationality with itself in ordinary experience. But there is also, in and because of the non-coincidence, a relation of productivity inherent to the facts, as well as to the intuitive logic we have, of experience. (p. 11)

As cited by Sankaran (2009), Arif Dirlik has criticized postfoundational critiques of Eurocentrism, suggesting that de-centric alternative histories like those of Eze, Escobar and perhaps Quijano—those championing heterogeneity, the local, the fragment, the relational, the hybrid—"all end up in a form of individualistic culturalism or lifestyle politics" (pp. 116-117). This would be a legitimate concern if Eze, Escobar and Quijano were made of straw. Instead,

acknowledging the chaotic inextricability of all social beings, the image of rationality I have now presented is particular but not atomistic, total and yet not universal. It is conscious of its limits as a holographic projection—a mirage, a reflection of its own reflection—holistically deposing in/as a particular mind in/as a particular moment, before humbly making way once again for its own discrete, flickering, emergent renewal in the pluriverse.

Rationality Re-Bounded

If the closing paragraph of the above vignette sounds like a teleological appraisal of rationality, that's because it is; by my measurements, a vernacular rationality would be otherwise unintelligible. And that is not the last time I will wriggle out of a self-imposed philosophical constraint in this chapter. While universalism may be structurally implosive and even downright sinister, I insist the passiveness of its dichotomous alternative, relativism, is far more dangerous. To explicate, my own vernacular rationality will manifest here as a pronouncement of the hazards of superstition, a most treacherous form of irrationality. To employ superstition is to see pattern where there is only coincidence and to relinquish a degree of autonomy to a "personification of the winds." Superstition can displace *learning,* occlude *evidence,* and encourage harmful *behaviours* such as treating sick children with ritual rather than medicine. Despite the existential humility this thesis has hitherto worked to espouse, the words I have emphasized in the lines above carry a great deal of universal gravity. Rationality is bound up with our material well-being; adjusting our behaviour in the light of new evidence is paramount to our continued survival as embodied creatures, and this is true of every last one of us. We can speak of disseminative drift, metaphoricity, mirages and alternative ontologies all we like, but the pale blue skin of a young soldier who will never re-animate, the wail of a mother who has lost her child to a suicide bomber, the delighted giggle of a ticklish toddler—these are

reifications that transcend not only language but our ethical obligations of non-interference. (In the third case, we may have an obligation to tickle that child until he pees himself.)

What I seem to be touching on here is a form of pragmatism, or a highly reflexive qualified universalism, a "supremely fictive" experiment that will be discussed in the next chapter. Certainly, the "knowledge" that my suite of reason is better suited to the well-being of humanity than one that rationalizes human sacrifice, female genital mutilation, the criminalization of homosexuality, or other "human rights violations," held in constant tension with the "knowledge" that all universalism is inherently oppressive—this creates a rather disquieting friction. Indeed, writing under the blinding haze of the glory of the linguistic turn, I could be accused of having my head in the clouds of abstraction. I would reply that the clouds are in fact a low-slung fog and I keep tripping on the bloody concrete. And it hurts.

Chapter 8 – An Experiment with Imposed Freedom

> Politics, then, is about the creation of a force that can overcome obstacles... a fictional force, an artful force.... True politics is rare, the obstacles are vast and the force required to bring it about is exceptional. (Simon Critchley, 2012, p. 39)

> I am convinced that no education intending to be at the service of the beauty of the human presence in the world, at the service of seriousness and ethical rigor, of justice, of firmness of character, of respect for differences ... can fulfill itself in the absence of the dramatic relationship between authority and freedom. (Paulo Freire, 2004, p. 9)

There, on the Dotted Line

This manuscript has steeped Philosophy for Children in an acidic brew of ethically-charged metaphysical conundrums: as a normative response to the national issue of gender- and sexuality-based bullying, P4C straddles a most peculiar line between blunt instrumentalism and oppressive neutrality; while it promises epistemic equality, it buoys itself with self-contained rationalism and tautology; and while claiming reflexivity, it finds itself to be a singularity of implosive universality, a menace of pedagogical self-contradiction. I have argued that universalism finds traction, however, in the precariousness of embodiment and the human phenomenological baseline that is suffering. And I maintain that universal physical vulnerability, epitomized by our collective mortality, and the widespread, differentially distributed phenomenon of anguish, together command an emergent, quasi-foundational experiment in rationality—an experiment guided by fluidic, transformative, self-reflective tenets of caring, creative, critical thinking. In a nutshell, an experiment with P4C.

Our experiment does not eschew or take for granted these lofty dislocations. Instead, such tensions coalesce in the moment we attempt to circumscribe and instantiate *democratic*

education. Lest politics degrade into policing, democratic education intrinsically occupies the realm of what Jacques Derrida calls the *aporetic* or the (im)possible (Friedrich, Jaastad & Popkewitz, 2010), which is to say both and neither achievable and/nor infeasible. Like the always-not-yet of the universal (Todd, 2010), the P4C community of inquiry, then, as an experiment in epistemic equity, must perpetually defer its success. Arguing from within a Rancièrean framework, Friedrich, Jaastad and Popkewitz claim that democratic education is a self-defeating ideal, an oxymoron, rooted in social engineering and the systemic propagation of inequality. Democracy is necessarily unplanned and intangible, they argue, otherwise it becomes warped into an act of policing.

Critchley (2012), too, engages with political paradoxes, showing how Rousseau's *The Social Contract* is centred around a number of conceptual *décalages,* or quasi-transcendental dislocations, which position modern politics, or "popular sovereignty," as more of an aggravating riddle than a soluble problem. Indeed, as Critchley shows through his analysis of Rousseau, one such *décalage* that permeates the notion of any democratic institution, which would include our P4C community of inquiry, is the paradox of sovereignty: "How can citizens wear legitimate chains?" (p. 37). The response to this riddle proposed by Critchley and Rousseau, channeling the ethos of existentialists like Nietzsche and Camus, is art. The art of politics requires a collective leap of faith around a *civil catechism* on the part of a *patriotic citizenry*—the latter being, in this case, the P4C students and facilitator.

To better understand this civil catechism in the context of P4C, we might look to the notion of subjectification, the moment when the people becomes a people (Critchley, 2012). As noted in Chapter 5 of this thesis, postmodernist critics of P4C are suspicious of the program's implicit archetyping of the "philosophical child" (Gregory, 2010). Similarly, Gert Biesta (2011)

rejects the commonsense idea that the goal of citizenship education is to produce a positive identity shaped around the nebulous, contestable archetype of the "good citizen." Instead, he injects Rancière's anarchic politics (i.e., that which is unstable in form and structure) into his own archetypal *ignorant citizen*, the latter emerging as a democratic subject in the process of "exposure to and engagement with the experiment of democracy" (p. 152). Much like the sort of student who might take a particular interest in P4C, however, the ignorant citizen is neither passive nor disinterested. Instead, she is most engaged and "refuses to be domesticated, refuses to be pinned down in a pre-determined civic identity," manifesting a desire for democracy that cannot be taught, only fuelled (p. 152). In her anticipation of the unexpected, in her demand for excess and possibility, our ignorant citizen, then, embodies queerness.

The emergence of the democratic subject—our P4C community member—around the skeleton of the ignorant citizen is not without its share of *décalages,* however. Critchley (2012) augments the political theory of Rousseau, toying with subjectification, sovereignty and law. Critchley characterizes the very *being* of the political as an encapsulation of the paradox of sovereignty: "How can human beings live according to a law that they recognize as equally binding on all citizens, as legitimate for the collective as a whole, and yet at the same time a law to which they freely submit because they see it as an expression of their own freedom?" (p. 37). Critchley cites Rousseau, the latter stating that it is the social contract that provides the solution to this fundamental problem. To Critchley's mind, though, this is a very peculiar contract, requiring "a fictional force, an artful force" (p. 39), for otherwise how does a collective, egalitarian subjectivity such as our community of inquiry emerge in the absence of the individual subjectivities that form in the very moment when the people becomes a people? The effect must precede the cause. "In other words," writes Critchley, "the essence of politics is a fiction, an act

of creation that brings a subject into existence" and Rousseau's so-called social contract "is not a contract based on exchange between parties, but an act of constitution, of fictive constitution, where a people wills itself into existence" (p. 40). This tension inheres, too, in our P4C community of inquiry as it materializes as a democratic micro-polity.

Critchley (2012) delineates Rousseau's method for approaching this tension, of balancing claims of freedom with those of equality, as an elegant denial of their antithesis, making instead a distinction between the *will of all* and the *general will*. Critchley shows how the will of all is the collection of disparate, individual self-interests, as in a liberal democracy, and the general will is one's will as a citizen, the common interest that tends toward the public good. To choose in relation to the general will is to acquire civil liberty, a "moral freedom that is only acquired in society with others and consists in obedience to a law that I give myself, i.e. which is consistent with my autonomy" (p. 42). In this way equality is the expression of freedom when it is rightly understood, and there is no conflict between the two. Indeed, he claims, they are two sides of the same coin; "the metal that melds the two sides of the coin is a love of one's city, of one's *patrie,* and Rousseau vigorously defends the need for civic patriotism" (p. 43). This is accomplished through ceremonies, spectacles, games and festivals (p. 45). Furthermore, writes Critchley, this patriotism manifests as a love of the laws of the *patrie.* To quote Rousseau: "Therefore, form men if you want to command men: if you would have the laws obeyed, see to it that they are loved," and virtue, says Rousseau, is that beautiful trait that animates the will of the particular to conform with the general will (as cited by Critchley, p. 44).

Extending Rousseau's and Critchley's political musings from "men" to young citizens of all genders, the task of getting our students to buy into P4C, to freely and enthusiastically abide by the rules of the community of inquiry, can be eased through play and spectacle—games,

events, performances, the sorts of rituals that schools are already experts at putting on. So what, exactly, are our assumedly virtuous P4C students and teacher buying into? Here we are left with the philosophically delicate task of forming rules of law by which all members of the community of inquiry must abide, rules that are not imposed from without but freely chosen. "If the social contract, understood as the coincidence of freedom and equality in the general will, is what breathes life into a legitimate polity, then it is law that gives that polity the motivation and legs to get up and walk" (Critchley, 2012, p. 54).

We require first a *catechism of the citizen* (in P4C, a succinct list of ground rules) and subsequently a *quasi-divine legislator* (for our purposes, a caring professional) to enforce the doctrine upon which the group is founded (Critchley, 2012). It is easy to imagine accusations of "cult" echoing through the hillside, but this theological vocabulary is only meant to demonstrate the necessity of imposed, external tenets—ground rules—in order for our community of inquiry to get off the ground. These ground rules also provide our enthusiastic "ignorant citizens" with philosophical leverage as they emerge as democratic subjects who simultaneously create and embody the homogeneous general will toward caring, creative and critical thinking. If this materialization of the polity is what we hereby define as the "social contract," then admittance to the P4C circle requires a pre-contractual obligation—an oath to respect and adhere to the ground rules or be excluded from the community—perhaps an alternative activity completed in the principal's office. These ground rules would reflect the tentative commitments of P4C through the eyes of Gregory's (2010) panel, including, for instance, curiosity about alternative perspectives, mutual accountability, freedom of expression, non-dogmatism, and self-correction. They might also reflect Ruitenberg's (2007) call for pluralism and an operational distinction between judgments and preferences, as well as Pineda's (2009) criteria for good-reason-giving.

Nonetheless, rule number one, in keeping with postmodernist humility and incredulity, may be that all rules are subject to evolution and debate.

Similar in structure to the self-imposed chains of Rousseau's polity, convoluted dislocations occur in the thinking of Jacques Derrida, whose *aporia* of justice conceptualizes the latter as having, simultaneously, conditions of (im)possibility. As skillful *bricoleurs,* Friedrich et al. (2010) weave Rancière's colourful political threads with Derrida's holographic image of justice:

> Democracy, we would say, takes place in those undecidable moments of exposed tension between justice/politics and law/police, between the incalculable and the calculated, between the equality of all and unequal conditions. As such, the planning of subjects negates democracy and justice, by countering the possibility of a responsible experience with an expected response, by turning dissensus into a problem to be solved by consensus. Therefore, democracy remains, and always will, to come, even as it continuously opens up the spaces to experience the impossible. (p. 583)

Clearly, the mission to engineer the ideal democratic school community defies these authors' archetypes of democracy and justice. But there is no such thing as a perfect system in practice; some degree of policing is inescapable in any polity. Here I turn to Critchley (2012) once again, as his formulation of *fictional force* is precisely the response (if not the solution, *per se*) to our paradoxical riddles, our *décalages* of politics. For Critchley, due to the contradictions that comprise them, politics, law and religion—and by extension, our democratic community of inquiry—are all fictions, albeit necessary ones. Accordingly, he posits a crucial distinction between fiction and *supreme fiction*, thus fighting *décalage* with *décalage*: "Paradoxically, a supreme fiction is a fiction that we know to be a fiction—there being nothing else—but in which

we nevertheless believe. A supreme fiction is one self-conscious of its radical contingency" (p. 91). Supreme fiction, writes Critchley, is formed in the collision of poetry and politics; politics, then, is conceived as radical creation, as "perfected art." Likewise, our catechism of the citizen—our list of ground rules—would be a supreme fiction (pp. 92-93), as would our democratic community of inquiry.

P4C for Freedom

Under the suspicious gaze of postmodernism, all social experimentation reveals itself to be supremely fictive. But this insight does not diminish the necessity to attempt emancipatory transformation, to give queer pedagogy a shot. When we conceptualize our experiment as one of *negative rights* (Airton, 2013), of removing something unequivocally bad, rather than adding something presumed to be good but as yet untested, we lend, I believe, a degree of structural coherence and ethical soundness to our experiment. Airton suggests that "advocating for *everyone's negative right to freedom from gender- and sexually-normative coercion* may open the door for all children to envision idiosyncratic lives regardless of their past, present or future affinities, expressions and/or sexual object choice(s), or the degree to which these change over time. Perhaps we ought to subtract where we have been adding" (p. 551, emphasis mine). Airton adds, "I propose that an experimental, provisional application of a negative rights framework stands a good chance of making something happen along these lines in schools and other places where young people gather together, learning how to be and be well" (p. 552). I could not agree more.

I have argued that Philosophy for Children presents a virtuous, if specious—and an indispensible, if impossible—experiment in democratic education. I suggest the experiment gains further ethical inertia through Eze's (2008) conception of *reason in experience*, which posits

rationality not as a closed system but as an emergent, local, pluralistic enigma in which we find freedom of thought wedded with the impulse to survive and thrive in everyday life. This conception of rationality coincides with Lipman's (1995) notion of creative thinking in P4C, an expressive form of discovery involving "a thrust towards self-transcendent originality, towards going beyond, in some fashion, what it has been, so as not to repeat itself" (p. 65). Rationality, then, leaves room for excess and possibility, which is to say that our "ignorant citizen"—he, she or they who freely accepts the ground rules and embodies the general will by dutifully entering the circle and participating in the community of inquiry—espouses queer rationality, or perhaps rational queerness, and enjoys a space bubbling with freedom. When applied through a queer, critical discursive and pedagogical framework, this freedom of thought in P4C is met with the negative right to freedom from normative coercion (Airton, 2013), intrinsic freedom of expression (Gregory, 2010), and the freedom to co-constitute and adhere to the general will of supremely fictive democratic citizenship (Critchley, 2012). *Décalages* notwithstanding, freedom abounds under the tenets of P4C.

Figure Skaters, Hockey Players & Unicorns

Remember me as a Unicorn. ... I'll fly away,
mysterious, enigmatic, energetic, pure, and graceful.
(Jamie Hubley shortly before his suicide, as quoted by Grace, 2013.)

Generalized, postmodernist incredulity toward truth-statements notwithstanding, this thesis and policy proposal is motivated by the impassioned declaration that *we must experiment with change; our youth deserve better.* Jamie Hubley, an openly gay Ottawa high school student who took his own life in 2011 after years of relentless, horrific bullying, deserved better. Billy Lucas, Asher Brown, Raymond Chase, Seth Walsh and Tyler Clementi, all American teenagers who committed suicide in the same month in 2012 after enduring homophobic harassment, deserved better. André Grace describes the issue poignantly:

> When SGM persons are young and vulnerable, homo/bi/transphobic bullying, which is a composite of the symbolic and physical violence that heterosexism and sexism induce, can exacerbate thoughts of suicide, leaving miserable youth to ideate about, attempt, or complete the process. What appears to be a current epidemic of gay-male youth suicide in Canada and the United States is providing blitzing reminders of this abject reality. (2013, p. 132)

Following Jamie Hubley's suicide, Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird announced, "Bullying, homophobia, intolerance and incivility have no place in our schools. It underlies the real challenge of depression and mental health, especially among young people.... Let us resolve, as a society, to promote tolerance and acceptance of each and every one of our fellow citizens" (The Canadian Press, 2011). And yet, Bill C-279, which would amend the Canadian Human Rights Act to include gender identity protections for all Canadians, has, at press time, been stalled in the Senate since March 2013 (Wingrove, 2014). And here in Alberta, Liberal MLA

Laurie Blakeman's private member's bill, Bill 202, which would have made gay-straight alliances (GSAs) mandatory in schools where students ask for them, was shuffled out of consideration in December 2014; accordingly, school boards in the province can continue to prohibit GSAs (Bellefontaine, 2014).

Policy and legislation does exist in some districts and provinces across the country to protect sexual and gender minority youth. Exemplars include Edmonton Public Schools, the first school district in the prairies to develop a comprehensive stand-alone sexual orientation and gender identity policy and administrative regulation (Edmonton Public Schools, n.d.), and the province of Ontario which, in 2012, passed Bill 13, the *Accepting Schools Act,* as part of a comprehensive action plan to support the safety and inclusion of all students (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2012). I insist that these laws and policies should be augmented by prosocial, democratic, queer, critical pedagogy such as P4C, and in jurisdictions where explicit protections are not in place, often due to social conservatism and religious fundamentalism, P4C may serve as one of the first lines of defense against antisocial dogmatism.

Four days after his son's suicide, grieving father Allan Hubley, a Kanata South city counsellor, released a statement, of which the following is an excerpt:

> Jamie is free of his pain now, and there is a new angel, but we have paid too high a price. ... There are some reports in the media and on social media that James was bullied. This is true. ... In grade 7 he was treated very cruelly simply because he liked figure skating over hockey. ... Recently, when Jamie tried to start a Rainbow Club at his high school to promote acceptance of others, the posters were torn down and he was called vicious names in the hallways and online. We had meetings with officials at school and were working with them to bring an end to it, but Jamie felt it would never stop. ... I will be

> working hard to use my energy and public position to help bring awareness and resources to those groups working to stop the bullying and find a treatment for depression. (as quoted by Grace, 2013, p. 134)

I cannot say with any certainty that Philosophy for Children could have saved Jamie's life. Yet, despite supportive parents and school administrators, Jamie's torment at the hands and tongues of his peers was unrelenting. André Grace's words resonate with me as he writes:

> Working to achieve these goals [to prevent bullying and improve access to mental healthcare] provides a constructive way to vent valid anger in the interest of making life better *now* for SGM youth. We have to be practical and productive today so all SGM youth will have a tomorrow and the possibility of being happy and healthy in the future. (2013, p. 135, his italics)

I insist that a practical and productive approach to ensuring the healthiness, hopefulness, and longevity of our youth should include an experiment with P4C. Cultivated as queer, critical, postmodern pedagogical advocacy, P4C holds great potential to diminish the intrinsic motivations for peer victimization, motivations that persist despite the support of parents and caring professionals. Additionally, even with marriage equality and other basic protections for sexual and gender minorities in place, P4C could serve as a crucial component of the continuing struggle for fundamental human rights, offering students a space to advocate for the freedom of all young people to survive and thrive at school, regardless of the fidelity with which they conform to arbitrary sexual and gender norms. As P4C founder Mathew Lipman writes, "A present-day classroom from which the critical, creative and caring spirit is lacking prefigures a world that is disspirited, unreasonable and uncaring. We can do better" (1995, p. 70). The time to do better is now.

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