

Reading the world, reading the word: Why Not now, Bernard is not a case of suicide, but self-killing

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Philosophical teaching gives permission to learners to explore the meaning of texts by drawing on their own experiences. By thinking out loud, they construct new meanings of texts. As a result of this oral work, what texts mean shifts in the unique relationship between text and reader and include child's voice. If educators nurture children's competencies and abilities in interrogating texts philosophically, their ability to read against texts will not only be strengthened, but the reading experience itself will also be transformative – but neither in the sense that South African educator Jonathan Jansen suggests, nor as proposed by Critical Literacy. Philosophical teaching assumes a relationship of 'emptying', not 'filling', and a conscious effort from the teacher to resist the urge to regard education as a formation of childhood. My argument will be supported by a transcript of a dialogue I facilitated with nine-year-olds discussing Bernard's apparent suicide in David McKee's picturebook Not now Bernard.

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Talking as thinking out loud

Child's first empirical encounter in life with language is oral. However, this medium of communication is commonly regarded as unimportant for new knowledge construction. Spontaneous conversation among peers is usually regarded as mere transgression from the 'real work' in classrooms where "speech of friends is forbidden and re-defined as idle chatter" (Simms, 2011: 29). In schools, adults are positioned as the interpreters of texts and their role is to mediate between a child's orality and the abstract language of books. Adults' authoritative speech is to be listened to by learners as a means of accessing what texts "are about" and, as such, a dichotomy has emerged in education "between the world of child's conversation and the world of formal instruction" (Consentino, 1997: 3). Classroom language can be

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characterised by its uniformity and its relative indifference to lived contexts (Lipman, 1991: 10). By contrast, children's speech is profoundly social and interpersonal and makes it possible to produce and sustain thinking, or as Simms (2011: 23) puts it: "Thought urges toward expression in language, and expressive speaking moves thinking forward". Unlike constructivists, phenomenologists hold the view that there are limits to language as a tool for expressing thought, but language is more a case of "the subject's taking up a position in the world of his or her meaning" (Simms, drawing on Merleau-Ponty, 2011: 23, 24). As famously expressed by Paulo Freire, our experience of the world is a text that needs to be interpreted; ontologically and epistemologically, the critical reading of the *world* or reality comes before the reading of the *word* (Kohan & Wozniak, 2009: 18). Philosophical readings of the world involve questioning our being in the world and our relationship to reality; it is not simply a matter of *applying* academic philosophical content knowledge. Philosophical questioning is not about something "external", but crucially involves "putting oneself in question while questioning" and, in particular, one's relationship with knowledge and with thinking itself (Kohan & Wozniak, 2009: 20, 22). After all, philosophy is the discipline that concerns itself with the human endeavour of 'thinking about thinking'. Reporting on their adult literacy course in Brazil, Kohan and Wozniak describe how philosophy's principle of problematisation through questioning changed their students' thinking and being in the world:

Accustomed to being told what to think and believe by their churches, political figures, bosses at work, teachers at school and others, the process of participating in 'emptying' rather than 'filling' was at first frustrating for many of the students ... Participants in our course came to question the relationship they had with knowledge, as something settled that they needed to receive. This kind of relationship had to be unlearned in order to build a new one: a questioning and dialogical relationship with knowledge (Kohan & Wozniak, 2009: 22; my emphasis).

Such a philosophical stance towards knowledge cannot be taught using a prescribed method or procedure, and at first some students felt frustrated by "not learning anything" or having teachers that "don't teach" (Kohan & Wozniak, 2009: 22). However, the experience of thinking out loud ultimately provoked a transformation in how they started to doubt the way in which they were living their lives and began "to think in new ways and created a new relationship with thinking" (Kohan & Wozniak, 2009: 22). Being allowed to think out loud, using their own rich experiences, and being listened to philosophically were necessary conditions for this transformation.

Obstacles for listening to child

Kohan and Wozniak's work with illiterate adults bears many resemblances to young children's work in literacy. When teaching people who cannot read or write fluently and with confidence, oracy offers unique experiences to explore the meanings of texts by reading *their* world. Spaces are created where claims to knowledge can be expressed, challenged and reconstructed and, as Kohan and Wozniak claim (2009:

20), the reader finds his/her own voice in the text. Lacking socio-economic status, illiterate people are often not taken seriously as knowledge bearers and their voices are perhaps heard, but not *listened* to. According to feminist philosopher Miranda Fricker (2007), in such instances there is a moral wrongdoing to a person in his/her capacity as a knower. She calls this epistemic *injustice*: hearers' prejudices, based on criteria such as age, socio-economic status and accent, cause them to miss out on pieces of knowledge offered by a person. Moreover, without epistemic trust and epistemic equality, people's confidence in interpreting their own social experiences gradually diminishes and their self-confidence as knowers erodes.

In our encounters with children, conceptions of childhood inform how adults interpret their educational encounters with children (the empirical bodies of a certain age in their classrooms). Assumptions about children's 'natural' psychological development through age-related stages still inform much of educational practice (see, for example, Burman, 2001, 2008; Dahlberg & Moss, 2005).²

How social power operates in epistemic interactions also has a direct bearing on the texts we choose for teaching and the room we make as educators to 'allow' children to critically explore the meaning of a text on their own terms. Texts are never 'innocent' in the sense that the norm of what it means to be childlike is firmly embedded in texts written for children. Adults' power in determining which texts are used in class is absolute: children are neither involved in the creation of children's literature or textbooks, nor in decisions about what should and should not be published, nor in the selection of books for schools, libraries or shops, nor (on the whole) in decisions about which book to buy and read. In various social domains, adults – authors, publishers, booksellers, librarians, and teachers – decide what is good, better, and best for children to read. Therefore, the obstacles for listening to child are not only adults' normative beliefs about age, but also adults' choice of classroom texts and how we use such texts – all three are interconnected.

Relational pedagogy: The 'felt weight' of the other

The possibility of problematising the normativity of texts can take place through various educational interventions. For example, an approach called Critical Literacy (CL) offers learners definite knowledge as a tool to explore how texts position readers in terms of power (see, for example, Janks, 2010). Through critical rational analysis, readers can be made aware of how texts give messages about what they should think and feel, and how their subjectivity is constructed. In her defence of the importance of CL, Janks (2011) argues for a need to disrupt the ways of thinking, believing and valuing that are inscribed in the discourses we inhabit. I agree with Janks that all language is politicised and, as Burbules (2000: 15) warns: "those modes of dialogue that put the greatest emphasis on criticality and inclusivity may also be the most subtly co-opting and normalizing".

Thus, the philosophical approach I advocate for reading texts makes it possible for learners to critically interrogate texts at a metacognitive level: the knowledge

claims and experiences of *all individual bodies* in class can become the subject for philosophical investigation, including the normativity of teachers' post-structuralist analysis of texts in CL and the binary opposites it presupposes. Adults also bring their preferred 'reading of the world' into the classroom. What counts as knowledge and for whom can be interrogated by children themselves through drawing on their own experiences. Significantly, the role of the teacher shifts to that of co-enquirer, rather than knowledge 'bearer' or 'transmitter'.

The abstract and universal knowledge CL brings into the classroom is, as Jansen (2009: 256, 260) puts it, a world "divided between black and white, working and privileged classes, citizens and illegal immigrants, men and women, straight and queer, oppressors and oppressed". He acknowledges the importance of such knowledge for critical text analysis, particularly in classrooms recovering from oppressive regimes. However, he argues that a conception of otherising the "enemy", i.e. "a capitalist system, oppressive processes, imposing ideologies, the neoliberal state" and so forth, runs the risk of ignoring "the real human beings" teachers encounter in classrooms (Jansen, 2009: 257). South African classrooms, he continues, are

deeply divided places [where] contending histories and rival lived experiences come embodied with indirect (and sometimes direct) knowledge into the same pedagogical space [and the] teacher is implicated within the social and pedagogical narrative, not some empowered educator who has figured out the problems of an unequal world and stands to dispense this wisdom to receiving students (Jansen, 2009: 258).

Jansen's pedagogical solution is for teachers not to take sides and to create a safe psychological space in classrooms for learners to speak freely and openly. This excludes teachers' "self-righteous" judgements (Jansen, 2009: 259). Aware of the complexity of education for social justice, Jansen (2009: 264) argues that teachers' own positioning and prejudices are not beyond scrutiny, and for a post-conflict pedagogy it is crucial for educators to consciously position themselves to listen to their learners, and this requires "emotional attunement" to the bodies in the room in "an empathic attempt to understand".

Jansen's *psychological* solution does not really touch on the *epistemic* injustice involved in adults' failure to listen to the individual child and to take child seriously as thinker who can hold and justify profound beliefs, as I will exemplify later in this article. In his analysis of what it means to listen attentively to children, he suggests that teachers need to challenge (he means 'a listening out for'), for example, racist knowledge that assumes White superiority and Black subordination. Despite his admirable attempt to shake off some naturalised dichotomies and his critique of South Africans who interpret all human encounters in terms of race,³ his analysis assumes some clear essentialisms ('racial psyches'), generalisations (for example, White students who are "stunted in their social, moral and emotional development") and polarised binary opposites (for example, victim versus non-victim) (Jansen, 2009: 265). The risk involved in taking such 'certain' knowledge into the classroom

as a means to ‘fill’ and ‘form’ the child is the diminished view of the young self it presupposes (Ecclestone & Hayes, 2009).

The therapeutic trend in education presupposes a fragile self that is in need of rescuing and normalisation, and the danger is that learners *start* to construe themselves as victims, as racists, and so on (the ‘treatment’ may become the cause rather than the cure). People’s effort to avoid challenge and conflict in order to maintain peace and harmony in class can be to the detriment of children’s willingness and courage to think out loud about more thorny and uncertain questions they generate themselves.

The creation of a space for children to ask questions that really matter to them, and the nurturing of a thinking out loud that goes beyond repetition of the given is deeply complex. It requires first and foremost adults’ critical reflexive stance towards their own prejudices about child and what child is capable of as a thinker. The relational pedagogy I use is not simply another strategy or method that helps to produce or transform certain types of subjects or outcomes: child is regarded as capable of innovative philosophical thinking. S/he is imaginative and open-minded; capable of dialogue and of self-regulation in the context of sustained participation in a community; morally alert and capable of choice and judgement; interested in the welfare of others; capable of conceptual exploration and analysis, and a person worth listening to.

Against someone like Jansen, Sinha (2010: 460) argues that the “felt weight” of the other in dialogue cannot be understood by the psychological language of feeling – feelings understood as mental states “inside” the subject. The epistemic contribution children can make to classrooms, as imagined by Jansen, is to take transformation a step further and allow young thinkers to enquire collaboratively and philosophically about the meanings of abstract concepts such as ‘victim’, ‘race’ and even ‘racism’ – without guidance by adult pre-determined outcomes.

‘Emptying’, not ‘filling’

Texts for children are ideal opportunities for adults to carry out their ideals about childhood. By contrast, making room for children’s own questions and philosophical ideas makes it possible to read *against* the implicit messages in texts and – as Sinha (2010: 460) would put it – to be moved, stirred or excited by that which is not the self.

To reiterate, philosophical praxis assumes a relationship of “emptying” (“of unexamined ideas, dogmas, beliefs, questions and values”), not “filling” (Kohan, 2011: 349) and a conscious effort from the teacher to resist the urge to regard education as formation of childhood. This requires a more critical stance towards implicit ideologies in texts, as well as much unlearning. This unlearning includes a critical stance towards teachers’ role in CL, as it assumes that adults know better and best how “discourses produce us, speak through us” and how “the discourses that we inhabit” can be “challenged and changed” and produce “resistant readers”

through activities that encourage a particular kind of reading against texts using the categories described above (Janks, 2011). CL assumes that adults are in a good position to “imagine the possible and actual effects of texts to evaluate these in relation to an ethics of social justice and care” (CL, as described by Janks, 2011). Burbules (2000: 6) reminds us of how dialogues in class are “always on somebody’s terms and so threaten the maintenance of separate, self-determined identities”, the risk being that CL could exclude the child in decisions about what social justice and care mean in the future – concepts not ‘filled in’ by adults’ current desires and readings of the world.

Inspired by the writings of Manoel de Barros, Kohan (2011: 349) argues that we need to unlearn how we regard our learners, and unlearn the relationship to thinking fostered by educational institutions. Instead, he suggests a “childlike way of being in the world” in our educational encounters. Less shaped and formed by their educational institutions, children are more likely to think for themselves and can teach adults to be “less ‘full’, ‘fresher’, less prejudiced”, “more open to put themselves freely into question” (Kohan 2011: 349). The activities he suggests are adults’ childlike (not childish) involvement in activities such as drawing, painting and “formulating questions as a child does them”.

Philosophy’s boundaries have shifted under the influence of the recent rethinking of both pedagogy and childhood: the teacher needs to be open to be exposed, to be interrupted, to feel and think as if anything is possible in the space between teacher and learner. However, not only our pedagogical and socio-political beliefs and practices, but also the choice of text can hinder or support this experiential process of bringing something new into the world.

Choosing texts for reading *against* the text

How adult listens to child and withholds his/her own opinions is central to the emergence of something new in the process of thinking out loud together. Prejudices about children as immature or unsophisticated thinkers who so-called lack experience (Murriss, 2000) prevent philosophical contributions from being taken seriously by adults working with them, without romanticising, sentimentalising, or “exoticizing”⁴ the differences between adult and child. The point is that teachers should not underestimate the problem radical diversity (including age differences) poses in adults’ decision-making about what is important and meaningful to discuss in class.

One of the most critical decisions a teacher makes is the selection of texts for teaching, a powerful choice whose significance is underexplored in the context of recent discussion about listening to children (Haynes & Murriss, 2012). Adults need to be prepared to treat their own knowledge as contestable and be willing to inhabit the perplexity of children’s questions, even when they think they already know the answers. Teachers need to pay attention to the receptiveness of a resource towards what they themselves also find elusive, perplexing, troublesome or opaque.

Picture books⁵ are particularly useful and enjoyable resources for teaching philosophically. They can draw us into thinking, and can be open invitations to reading against texts. They should not be reserved for the teaching of literacy to the young. The indeterminate and ambiguous nature of contemporary picture books demands a pedagogy in which teachers do not control what counts as truth and meaning. Texts which maximise a sense of disorientation and uncertainty are open invitations to different ways of being and knowing, and liberate learners from the anxiety about finding the answer teachers want to hear.

Picturebooks entice curiosity about beings other than us. Open-ended exploratory dialogues between, for example, human characters or fantasy characters such as talking animals, monsters, witches, robots or teddy bears, invite readers to engage deeply with the philosophical questions that emerge in the moment and cannot be settled through observation or reference to established facts. Narrative characters such as monsters feature frequently in picturebooks and are often referred to pejoratively by adults; yet monsters' non-particularity (they are not creatures in the world, as we know it) frees the reader to respond to narratives philosophically and in a non-instrumental manner. Factual 'inaccuracies' can open playful unexpected lines of thought, and ironically encourage truth-seeking. It is by engaging with literature 'horizontally' and 'vertically'⁶ that our moral imaginations are engaged and expanded, while at the same time providing safe fictional distance. Picture book narratives can give both *permission* and *protection* to explore sometimes difficult questions or controversial issues when teachers are prepared to let children think out loud in their classrooms.

Listening to children's own ideas

A good example of a picture book that can provoke philosophical listening through its form and its content, and that engages the imagination vertically as well as horizontally is David McKee's *Not now, Bernard* (1980). The pictures show a monster who, in the text, is called 'Bernard' – the name of the boy who has just been gobbled up by the monster. Significantly, learners often spot that the eyes of Bernard's parents are closed when talking to their son (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: Children notice that the parents' eyes are often closed

They are not listening to Bernard. They do not even notice their son has been eaten by the monster – despite the boy's efforts to draw their attention to the danger that is lurking. This story is particularly powerful in how the familiar is made to seem strange, so that we view reality in a different light. In its play with reality, *Not now, Bernard* makes little logical sense, unless readers draw imaginatively on emotions such as loneliness, sadness, alienation and vulnerability; in turn, these emotions are always embedded in readers' own personal narratives. For example, parental neglect is easily recognisable for both adult and child. Philosophical teaching opens a conceptual and experiential space if teachers are prepared to listen responsively to what emerges as significant for the learners in the moment. In my own philosophical work with *Not now Bernard*, children's own embedded experiences of family relationships provoke imaginative speculation about other possible ethical relationships between parents and children. This includes issues concerning life and death that can easily provoke censorship by adults listening to children's philosophical dialogues.

Significantly, children often ask the kind of questions, or make the kind of inferences in an enquiry, that provoke new thinking. When I was teaching a class of nine-year-olds as part of my PhD research, the children raised the question as to why Bernard went into the garden, when he knew that a monster was going to eat him (and they knew that Bernard knew, because he had just told his Mum; see Figure 2.).

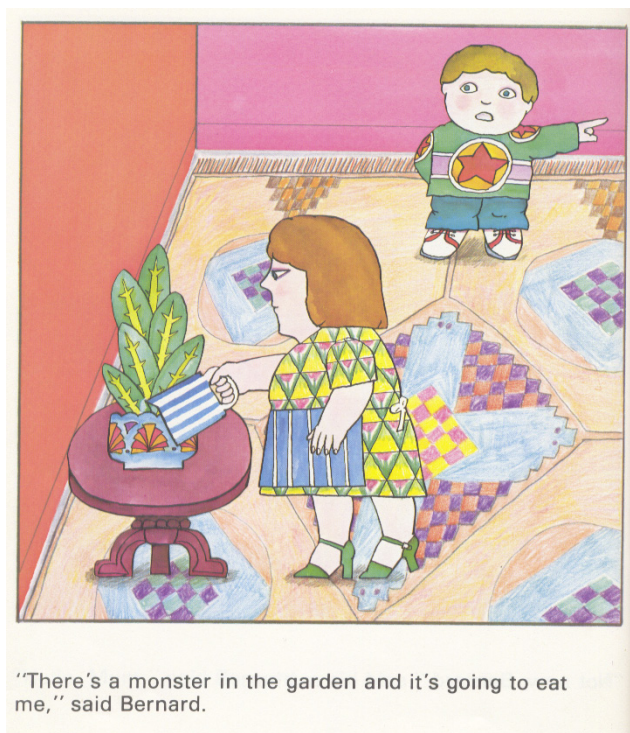


Figure 2: Why did Bernard go into the garden, when he knew that a monster was going to eat him?

The children, whose home language is English, concluded that he must have wanted to be eaten. Data collection for my research took place between 1989 and 1991, when research with children did not require children’s or parental consent. However, for the purposes of this article, they have been given pseudonyms. The dialogue unfolded as follows:

Gregory: He said that there is a monster outside that wants to eat me, so he wouldn’t have gone to the monster.

Teacher: That’s a very good point. If Bernard knew he was going to be eaten by the monster, why did he go in the garden?

Neill: I agree, why did Bernard actually want to be eaten by the monster?

Paul: Because his Mum and Dad don’t want him, because they don’t pay any attention to him.

Emma: They are not listening to him.

Claire: Bernard wanted to be eaten by the monster, because his Mum and Dad were ignoring him all the time.

Rian: He did suicide, because nobody loved him. He thought: That’s it ... I’m killing myself.

Alex: He could have done it in a less painful way! [laughter]

Teacher: What does that mean: suicide?

Kate: Suicide means that you really want to kill yourself, 'coz something went wrong really badly.

Paul: Committing suicide is actually when you kill yourself, and he didn't kill himself, because he got eaten. Also ... suicide is against the law, but there is no point, because when you're dead, how can you be punished?

Teacher: Is killing yourself always suicide?

Georgia: Killing yourself isn't always suicide, because you might be a baby or something fiddling with electricity without your Mum seeing ... you might not want to die, but you might electrocute yourself, without yourself want[ing] to die.

Kate: I agree with Georgia, because you can have a car accident and you can get killed, and we wouldn't know whether you crashed yourself into a brick wall.

Darren: Bernard might have been pretending, making it up ... to get attention.

The non-judgemental space opened by the teacher made it possible for these children to think out loud about a topic they wanted to talk about and made the kind of conceptual distinctions adults are introduced to when they do a philosophy course at university. Georgia distinguished between 'suicide' and 'killing yourself': those who commit suicide kill themselves, but not all self-killings are suicide. Suicide is a deliberate or intentional self-killing. This short transcript shows how children discuss philosophical issues when they interpret a story *literally* and read against the moral of the story – i.e., when children are neglected by their parents, they turn into monsters. They created their own philosophical problem, because they could not understand why Bernard went into the garden if he knew the monster would eat him.⁷ Philosophical enquiry is not so much about solving problems created by adults, but about creating one's own new ones.

The nine-year-olds took the information in the book seriously and engaged in a philosophical play with ideas. Of course, they knew the story was not 'real' life – expressed in remarks such as 'It's just a story', or 'They did that, 'coz otherwise there would be no point to the story'. However, within the context of it just-being-a-story, they listened to each other philosophically through reasoned responses to the various contributions.

A pedagogical analysis shows how philosophical listening is a necessary condition for progression in thought. Everyone was listening carefully to people's spoken contributions. Paul, Emma, Claire and Ryan directly responded to Neill's question which, in turn, was provoked by the teacher's intervention: Bernard, they said, was ignored, not loved and not listened to. Then, the teacher's question 'what is suicide?' problematised the straightforwardness of the concept 'suicide' and allowed Kate to forward an answer. This was then challenged by Paul, enabling him to make the profound distinction between 'suicide' and 'killing yourself'. In suicide, killer and killed are the same, but in Bernard's case it was the *monster* who killed Bernard, so Bernard did *not* commit suicide. This, in turn, was picked up by the teacher and presented as important for further reflection, thus enabling Georgia and Kate to give

examples by drawing on their own experiences to justify their claim that intention is a necessary condition for calling a self-killing 'suicide'. Darren's contribution to the intricate web of ideas resonated with theirs, but viewed the argument from a different angle: Bernard was simply pretending.

Reading the world

The children were making sense of the text philosophically by reading their world. Their thinking was not only creative, but also very logical. A picture in the book (Figure 3) shows the monster and Bernard as two physical entities at the same time.



Figure 3: The logical impossibility that Bernard and the monster can be one and the same

It is important to stress that the adult moral message, namely that children turn into monsters when neglected, was not 'missed', because they are 'immature' or 'lack experience' – comments often heard not only in in-service work with teachers, but also in institutions that train teachers and educational research. For the children, the visual information in the narrative makes it logically impossible. They were 'in' the story and simultaneously knew that it was 'just' a story.

Teachers tend to protect children at the expense of academic freedom and children's autonomy. This is often misplaced. Adult responses to the children's subsequent engaged involvement in a drawing activity exemplifies the structural and systemic extent of epistemic injustice in our work with children in classrooms. After the enquiry, some children had decided to make drawings of high buildings with children throwing themselves off them – killing themselves. The children proudly

hung them on the wall of the philosophy classroom. It is not accidental that these depicted buildings were well-known suicide spots in the part of town where they lived. The other teachers in the school were shocked when they saw the drawings for at least two reasons: they were surprised that the children had knowledge of what they had previously regarded as part of the adults' world, and moreover they judged that young children should be protected emotionally from the sad and 'darker' side of living a human life. The class teacher ordered the drawings to be taken down ('just in case their parents saw them').

This act of silencing is a good example of Fricker's notion of epistemic injustice that structurally takes place in our classrooms worldwide. The children were speaking with intent and purpose, and a particular kind of listening made it possible to hear the new knowledge they were constructing through their relationship and thinking with others. This alternative reading of texts assumes an emptying of adults' preconceived ideas and with it enables adults to have a uniquely different epistemic relationship with children.

The process of reading their world helped them make sense of their own social experiences without any obvious signs of disturbance or emotional upheaval. Adults were not hearing them when censoring their drawings, but the internalised voices of other adults: parents, colleagues, and so forth. The picturebook itself disturbed the adults. This is not only because of its lack of a happy ending (Bernard after all stays a monster and even as monster he remains ignored), but the parents are not depicted as caricatures or strange Others; they are easily recognisable and made to look ridiculous. Perhaps adults perceive these aspects as threatening or uncomfortable as they might identify themselves with the story's characters. Texts most suited for opening a philosophical space⁸ are those that hold up a 'mirror' for the adult and encourage a self-critical stance. Teachers, whose usual role is to articulate certainty, often struggle more with the indeterminacy of contemporary picture books than young people who have been born into a postmodern culture full of fragmented and indeterminate ironic images and ideas. Arguably, the use of such resources for education puts children on a more equal footing with adults, and appeals to people's sense of fun and willingness to play with philosophical ideas.

Kohan and Wozniak (2009: 24) argue that this philosophical process must be lived and felt, and that it cannot merely be discussed, written, or read about. They explain that their course with illiterate adults was not

designed to produce any particular political outcome. We invited students to think, but we did not demand that they think in a certain way or toward certain ideas, much less that their thoughts correspond to our thoughts.

This is not the same as saying that no transformation took place. Students became increasingly aware of the power they had over the way they live: "more power to live as they desire – if not in all aspects of their lives, at least in some of them" (Kohan & Wozniak, 2009: 24). Philosophical listening in the classroom implies turning one's back on the assumption that older is necessarily wiser, and accepting that a child or young person, like any other, can reveal something not yet considered or so far unspoken.

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Endnotes

1. Throughout this article I have adopted the use of the term 'child' without including an article 'the' to try and distance myself from the practice of talking about 'the child' as having a set of essential and universal characteristics, and often resulting in the marginalisation of children, but still to allow discussion of the concept: 'child'. 'Children' denotes particular children, living in particular times and places.
2. In my chapter 'The epistemic challenge of hearing child's voice' (2013), I give a more detailed overview of Fricker's work and the implications for listening to children.

3. He writes that the post-apartheid state has produced official victims, which exclude poor Whites, despite the fact that socio-economic status is “a more equitable and sensible way of accounting for difference in a capitalist society that professes nonracialism” (Jansen, 2009: 265).
4. This term is borrowed from Burbules (2000: 6).
5. The term ‘picturebooks’ is used instead of picture books to emphasise the interdependency of meaning constructed by the two very different sign systems (word and image).
6. Philosopher Martha Nussbaum claims a distinct and unique role for artists in the forceful way in which they can represent characters. She writes: “... literature is an extension of life not only *horizontally*, bringing the reader into contact with events or locations or persons or problems he or she has not otherwise met, but also, so to speak, *vertically*, giving the reader experience that is deeper, sharper, and more precise than much of what takes place in life” (Nussbaum, 1990: 48; my emphasis).
7. In my original research (Murriss, 1993, 1994, 1997), I used this transcript to show how much children can think like adult philosophers. Some 15 years later, I notice how my analysis of the same dialogue has shifted from a focus on content (a comparison between adult philosopher’s knowledge and children’s philosophical knowledge) to a concern about how certain pedagogies make the construction of children’s philosophical knowledge possible. My analysis is also different from those of colleagues in the field (see, for example, Matthews, 1992:1) who argue that most children instinctively recognise that *Not now, Bernard* is a fable. He claims that children seem willing to interpret the story in a symbolic way. Throughout the primary age range, my learners have never asked the latter question, because the mother could not – literally – see that it was a monster and not Bernard who was lying in bed.
8. For guidance with lesson preparation for philosophical enquiries using picture books, including *Not now, Bernard*, see Murriss and Haynes (2002, 2010).