

AUTHORING AND FACILITATING AFFECT  
THE PHILOSOPHICAL NOVEL AS  
A LIBERATING FORM OF AFFECTIVE LABOUR

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Abstract

This article focuses on the notion of affectivity, which over the last few decades has become an increasingly popular lens through which to study various themes in the humanities and social sciences, notably with respect to labour. The notion of “affective labour” has been deemed to encompass both work that requires emotional investment and work that is intended to produce emotional responses yet explorations of such work, though varied in scope, have generally not widened their breadth to include the field of education, inviting the question: Can educators and their pedagogical outputs be analyzed through the same affective lens used to study other professions? The Philosophy for Children (P4C) program created by Matthew Lipman and Ann Sharp represents an interesting case study of education as affective labour since it involves not only live educative encounters with groups of children but also virtual ones portrayed through its curriculum of philosophical novels. This article positions the Lipmanian philosophical novel as a form of affective labour both in process (the author’s experience—work that requires affective investment) and in delivery (the children’s experience—work that produces affective response). Drawing on the ideas of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, it seeks to demonstrate how the philosophical novel captures the liberating potential of affective labour—relational autonomy within a strong community—while avoiding its negative outcomes of exploitation and alienation. In doing so, it strives to articulate what the philosophical novel has already enabled and what it should aim to make possible in its future renditions. The article begins with a brief account of affective labour as an opportunity amidst risk then proceeds to examine the philosophical novel as a writing endeavour that “authors” affect and subsequently “facilitates” affect among children engaged in collaborative dialogue.

Key words. Affect, affective labour, autonomy, philosophy for children, philosophical novels

Autorando e facilitando os afetos: a novela filosófica como uma forma libertadora de trabalho afetivo

Resumo

Este artigo enfoca a noção de afetividade, que ao decorrer das últimas décadas se tornou uma lente cada vez mais popular para estudar vários temas nas humanidades e ciências sociais, notavelmente em relação ao trabalho. A noção de “trabalho afetivo” foi considerada para incorporar tanto o trabalho que requer um investimento emocional quanto o trabalho que é suposto produzir respostas emocionais, bem que a exploração de tal trabalho, que varia em seu escopo, geralmente não tenha ampliado sua abrangência para incluir o campo da educação, convidando à pergunta: Podem os educadores e suas saídas pedagógicas ser analisados com as mesmas lentes afetivas que usamos para estudar outras profissões? O programa de filosofia para crianças (FPC) criado por

Matthew Lipman e Ann Sharp representa um caso de estudo interessante da educação como trabalho afetivo desde que ele envolve não somente os encontros educativos ao vivo com grupos de crianças mas também encontros virtuais retratados por seu currículo de novelas filosóficas. Este artigo posiciona a novela filosófica lipmaniana como uma forma de trabalho afetivo ao mesmo tempo em processo (a experiência do autor - trabalho que requer investimento afetivo) e na entrega (a experiência da criança - trabalho que produz uma resposta afetiva). Desenhando a partir das ideias de Michael Hardt e Antonio Negri, eu procuro demonstrar como a novela filosófica captura o potencial de libertação do trabalho afetivo - autonomia relacional dentro de uma comunidade forte - enquanto evita seus resultados negativos da exploração e da alienação. Fazendo isso, ele se esforça em articular o que a novela filosófica já permitiu e o que ela deveria visar tornar possível em seus rendimentos futuros. O artigo começa com um breve relato sobre o trabalho afetivo como uma oportunidade dentre os riscos e então procedo ao exame da novela filosófica como uma tentativa de escritura que "os autores" afetam e subsequentemente "facilita" os afetos entre as crianças engajadas num diálogo colaborativo.

Palavras-chave: Afeto, trabalho afetivo, autonomia, filosofia para crianças, novelas filosóficas

*Autorando y facilitando los afectos: la novela filosófica como una forma liberadora de trabajo afectivo*

#### Resumen

Este artículo enfoca la noción de afectividad que en el transcurso de las últimas décadas se convirtió en un lente cada vez más popular para estudiar varios temas en humanidades y ciencias sociales, en particular en relación al trabajo. La noción de "trabajo afectivo" fue considerada para incorporar tanto el trabajo que requiere una inversión emocional como para el trabajo que supuestamente tiene que producir respuestas emocionales. La explotación de tal temática, que varía en objetivo, generalmente no se ha ampliado su alcance hasta incluir el campo de la educación, invitando a la pregunta: ¿Pueden los educadores y sus salidas pedagógicas ser analizadas con los mismos lentes afectivos que usamos para estudiar otras profesiones? El programa de Filosofía para Niños (FpN) creado por Matthew Lipman y Ann Sharp representa un caso de estudio de la educación interesante como trabajo afectivo en la medida que involucra no solo los encuentros educativos en vivo con grupos de niños sino también encuentros virtuales retratados por su currículo de novelas filosóficas. Este artículo posiciona la novela filosófica lipmaniana como una forma de trabajo afectivo al mismo tiempo en proceso (la experiencia del autor -trabajo que requiere inversión afectiva) y en la entrega (la experiencia del niño- trabajo que requiere inversión afectiva) dibujando a partir de las ideas de Michael Hardt y Antonio Negri, se busca demostrar como la novela filosófica captura el potencial de liberación del trabajo afectivo -autonomía relacional dentro de una fuerte comunidad- en cuanto evita sus resultados negativos de explotación y de alienación. Haciendo esto, se hace un esfuerzo en articular lo que la novela filosófica ya permitió y lo que debe aspirar a hacer posible en sus futuras entregas. El artículo comienza con un breve relato sobre el trabajo afectivo como una oportunidad dentro de riesgos y entonces procedo al examen de la novela filosófica como un intento de escritura que "los autores" afectan y subsequentemente "facilita" los afectos entre los niños involucrados en un diálogo colaborativo.

Palabras clave: Afecto, trabajo afectivo, autonomía, filosofía para niños, novelas filosóficas.



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## Introduction

Over the last few decades, affectivity has become an increasingly popular lens through which to study various themes in the humanities and social sciences, notably with respect to labour. The notion of “affective labour” has been deemed to encompass both work that requires emotional investment—from the fast food industry’s “service with a smile!” mantra to the nanny effect, where a caregiver’s main resource is her affectionate feeling, however inauthentic or undesirable—and work that is intended to produce emotional responses, like the efforts of advertisers to make audiences identify with commercial goods by manipulating their affective relationship toward them. Though varied in scope, these explorations have generally not widened their breadth to include the field of education, inviting the question: Can educators and their pedagogical outputs be analyzed through the same affective lens used to study other professions? The rising prominence of affective labour is certainly discernible in select progressive education movements, like the Philosophy for Children (P4C) program, where the aim of schooling surpasses rote learning and job preparation toward an emphasis on character building, meaning-making, critical reasoning and creativity.<sup>1</sup> This shift in pedagogical purpose has entailed a change in the educator’s self-image from instructor to facilitator, echoing the new notion of labour as including not only intellectual dimensions but also the capacity to create and manipulate affects

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<sup>1</sup> Martha Nussbaum argues for the necessity of progressive pedagogies — or education-for-wisdom models over and above education-for-profit models — in her 2010 book *Not For Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).

to ensure success. In this light, the P4C program created by Matthew Lipman and Ann Sharp represents an interesting case study of education as affective labour since it involves not only live educative encounters with groups of children but also virtual ones portrayed through its curriculum of philosophical novels.<sup>2</sup> With so little written on the Lipmanian philosophical novel as a pedagogical tool, such a case study highlights some of the opportunities and dangers inherent in writing fiction to promote children's thinking, underlining implications of affective labour beyond the oft-studied economic ramifications.

This article positions the Lipmanian philosophical novel as a form of affective labour both in process (the author's experience—work that requires affective investment) and in delivery (the children's experience—work that produces affective response). Drawing on the ideas of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, it seeks to demonstrate how the philosophical novel captures the liberating potential of affective labour—relational autonomy within a strong community—while avoiding its negative outcomes of exploitation and alienation. In doing so, it strives to articulate what the philosophical novel has already enabled and what it should aim to make possible in its future renditions. The article begins with a brief account of affective labour as an opportunity amidst risk then proceeds to examine the philosophical novel as a writing endeavour that “authors” affect and subsequently “facilitates” affect among children engaged in collaborative dialogue.

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<sup>2</sup> Henceforth, the term “philosophical novel” will be used specifically to designate the type of fictional stories that the Philosophy for Children program has generated or inspired.



## I. Affective labour – opportunity amidst risk

On the whole, investigations of affective labour have seemed pessimistic, even cynical, portraying the risks of exploitation as pervasive and the opportunities of liberation as illusory.<sup>3</sup> The appropriation of affect by labour can be deemed a threat to the integrity of workers, who risk being exploited for their capacity to experience or foster affect, and alienated through inauthentic affective pursuits mandated by dogmatic or oppressive agendas. When affect becomes a tool for neoliberal advancement, the possibility of liberation through affective work appears to dwindle since its potential to create a relational type of autonomy embedded in communal ties and projects gets co-opted by capitalistic motivations. The intrinsic worth of affective labour seems to lose out to its perceived instrumental value as a moneymaking endeavour.

Yet despite and amidst the plethora of risks, the opportunity that affective labour proffers under the right conditions demands consideration, especially in educational contexts, and Hardt and Negri offer a valuable conceptual starting point. Though complex and far-reaching, Hardt and Negri's project can be summarized as a philosophical inquiry into the prospects of democracy in a globalizing world—the globalization process has enabled, on the one hand, the formation of powerful networks of dominance constructing new (and largely exploitative) kinds of sovereignty and, on the other, the emergence of new connectivities between geographically disparate but conceptually like-minded people. In *Multitude*, Hardt and Negri describe industrial labour's declining dominance in favour of a newly hegemonic "immaterial labour"—the kind of

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<sup>3</sup> Whether from feminist perspectives — critiquing the caring, emotional and kin labour traditionally referred to as "women's work" — or from economic perspectives, notably the arguments of the Italian autonomists, who champion self-organized resistance to capitalism through workplace socialization, affective labour is routinely characterized as risky business. Methyl, 2012: 175.

work that yields intangible products in the form of knowledge, services, communications and emotional responses.<sup>4</sup> Immaterial labour comprises two types: the intellectual form involving “problem solving, symbolic and analytical tasks, and linguistic expressions” and producing ideas, symbols, codes, images and the like; and the affective form—the topic at hand—involving the creation and manipulation of affects and producing such feelings as “ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, or passion.”<sup>5</sup> On this account, affects have a specific meaning rooted in Spinoza’s Ethics: they consist of mental and bodily states or motions that impact an individual’s power of activity.<sup>6</sup> Though taxing and not always feasible, individuals must strive for active affects that positively increase their power to act by restricting the influence of their passions through reason—acting autonomously rather than being passively acted upon.<sup>7</sup>

When applied to affective labour, the “power to act and be affected” stresses the relational dimensions of work, whereby “our labouring practices produce collective subjectivities, produce sociality, and ultimately produce society itself.”<sup>8</sup> These immaterial productions are facilitated by the development of certain inclinations and skill-sets in affective labourers—communication, networking, knowledge sharing, community building—which in turn can help bolster the

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<sup>4</sup> Hardt and Negri are quick to add that this hegemony is more figurative than literal: “immaterial labour has become hegemonic in qualitative terms and has imposed a tendency on other forms of labour and society itself... today labour and society have to informationalize, become intelligent, become communicative, become affective.” Hardt and Negri, 2004: 108-109.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid: 108.

<sup>6</sup> Affects are deemed active — and thus desirable — when the change in activity they occasion originates within the individual’s nature and corresponds to his reason. When their source is external, they are deemed passive, trapping the individual in “inadequate ideas” and enslaving him in a “bondage” of passions. Benedict de Spinoza, “Part IV. Of Human Bondage, or the Strength of the Emotions” in Curley, 1996: 113-116.

<sup>7</sup> Hardt and Negri provide a specific interpretation of this framework: “For Spinoza, the ethical and political project involves a constant effort to transform passions into actions...the increased autonomy of the subject, in other words, always corresponds to its increased receptivity.” Michael Hardt, “What Affects Are Good For” in Clough and Halley, eds., 2007: x.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Hardt, 1999: 89.



“power to act” within themselves and others. Though misused by capital, these features of affective labour reveal great “potential for subversion and autonomous constitution”<sup>9</sup>—or what Hardt and Negri call “biopower from below.”<sup>10</sup> The resulting network of different yet commonly oriented subjects—the “multitude”—may thus emancipate itself: “while remaining different, we discover the commonality that enables us to communicate and act together.”<sup>11</sup> The opportunity amidst risk, then, lies in harnessing the potential of affective labour through the power to act it can nurture in individuals. One possible approach is a progressive education model like P4C and, more specifically, the pedagogical material that supports it.

## II. Authoring affects—the philosophical novel

P4C founders Matthew Lipman and Ann Margaret Sharp argue that multidimensional thought, or the balanced development of critical-, creative- and caring-thinking,<sup>12</sup> is best achieved through the practice of philosophical dialogue stimulated by fictional stories that connect young people to the philosophical dimensions of their lived experience. Their pedagogical model—the community of philosophical inquiry (CPI)—characterizes the philosophical novel as the springboard for shared, co-created philosophical experience with essential affective components. Here, the implications of affective labour can be considered

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid: 90.

<sup>10</sup> As Hardt puts it, “These dangers, however — important though they might be — do not negative the importance of recognizing the potential of labour as biopower, a biopower from below.” In this context, biopower refers to “the power of the creation of life.” Whereas labour was formerly focused on the production of goods and objects designed to support social life, it now manages to create social life itself by forging new ways of being, interacting, sharing, converging. Hardt, 1999: 98-100.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid: xiii.

<sup>12</sup> This triadic term was coined by Matthew Lipman to capture the “balance between the cognitive and the affective, between the perceptual and the conceptual, between the physical and the mental, the rule-governed and the non-rule governed” where the critical, creative and caring thinking types hold equal significance. Lipman, 2003: 200-201.

from two perspectives: what the worker experiences (the nature and conditions of writing philosophical novels to support P4C programming) and what the worker produces (the character and purpose of the affects generated by the novels themselves and by the dialogue they help stimulate in children). This section will focus on the worker's experience – the writing of philosophical novels as a process that requires affective investment and creates a certain kind of “power to act and be affected” through the “authoring” of affect.

The original P4C curriculum of philosophical novels was written by Lipman himself: though an academic philosopher, during his tenure at Columbia University, his uneasiness regarding his students' inability to think critically, imaginatively and compassionately about the controversial issues of the day led him to envisage a new way of doing philosophy with youth through an adaptation of two key facets of the philosophical tradition – narrative writing and dialogical practice.<sup>13</sup> Inspired by both the Socratic and pragmatic approaches,<sup>14</sup> Lipman envisioned the philosophical novel for children as a series of fictional though realistic scenarios depicting young protagonists exploring and discussing the puzzling philosophical aspects of their lives together and with adults – in sum, “trying to solve age-appropriate and, at the same time, philosophically real problems.”<sup>15</sup> He describes his first book, *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery*, a tale about a young boy learning to use informal logic and hypothetical thinking to solve mental dilemmas, as “a teaching model, non-authoritarian, and anti-

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<sup>13</sup> The original series of philosophical novels include: for primary school, *Elfie*, *Pixie*, *Kio and Gus* and *Nous*; for middle school, *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* and *Lisa*; for secondary school, *Suki and Mark*.

<sup>14</sup> Lipman argues that children's thinking is best nurtured through the doing (not just the studying) of philosophy, recalling the Socratic appeal to adopt philosophy as a way of life rather than a mere academic discipline. Further, this learning-by-doing emphasis recalls the progressive education ideas of pragmatist philosopher John Dewey who stresses the importance of incorporating inquiry into schools by connecting classroom experience with children's interests.

<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, Lipman shares many of his insights about his P4C program in a philosophical novel he writes for adults fictionalizing an ongoing exchange between himself and a journalist interested in his pedagogical approach. Lipman, 1996: 123.



indoctrinating...it sketches what it might be like to live and participate in a small community where children have their own interests, yet respect each other as people and are capable at times of engaging in cooperative inquiry.”<sup>16</sup>

In an assessment of Lipman’s texts, Darryl De Marzio characterizes this writing style as “a blend of both expository and narrative discourse” – of rationality and creativity as modes of higher-order thinking – that strives to “connect to a lost tradition of philosophy in which the role of the text was recognized as performing a transformative function.”<sup>17</sup> The resulting new genre of children’s literature has inspired P4C theorists and educators alike, with crops of original, adapted and translated stories emerging all over the world. As a new type of work that has survived its originator’s passing, the authoring of Lipmanian-style philosophical novels deserves consideration for its potential to generate what Hardt has dubbed “autonomous circuits of valorization,”<sup>18</sup> or unprecedented encounters with different ways of thinking and valuing that impact the power to act and be affected.

From a labour perspective, the work experienced in crafting a philosophical novel involves uniting artistic and pedagogic motivations: the author as both a novelist – creative, relatable, intuitive – and a curriculum writer – methodical, edifying, inclusive. The writing process represents the two sides of immaterial labour that Hardt and Negri identify: the intellectual and the affective, with the former requiring the latter to make the immaterial “goods” – the novel’s virtual encounters among children – more palatable, appealing and effective as prompts for real-life dialogue. Above all, the author of the philosophical novel aims to create the kinds of affects that will spur interest and engagement in conceptual

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<sup>16</sup> Lipman, Sharp and Oscanyan, 1980: 52.

<sup>17</sup> De Marzio, 2011: 33, 35.

<sup>18</sup> Hardt, 1999: 100.

issues relating to all branches of philosophy: logic, ethics, aesthetics, metaphysics and epistemology. In a word, these affects embody the spirit of curiosity—the enthralling puzzlement, uncertainty and fascination that emerge with the realization that an as-of-yet unexamined feature of life necessitates problematizing and exploration. For example, in the novel *Nous*, in which a group of children befriend a giraffe who wants to learn about ethical decision-making, curiosity-as-affect is generated through a discussion of moral criteria, including the role of emotions:

ISABEL: “Practically everything we do begins with the way we feel. If we feel mean, we act mean. If we feel good, we do good things. Emotions often turn into actions. Good emotions lead to right actions.”

GERALDO: “It’s really not quite so simple, Isabel, it might be better to say that our emotions influence our choices, and it’s our choices that lead us to act as we do. Good choices lead to right actions.” (...)

RUSTY: “You make it sound like our emotions are a kind of radar: they tip us off to what’s in the world around us.”

ISABEL: “You could say that. But all I’m arguing is that, as ways of seeing things, our emotions are as important as our eyes are. They relate us to the world. I mean, if you care for some person or place or thing, then it follows that you have a relationship with that person, place, or thing, like a caring relationship.”<sup>19</sup>

Here, an affective atmosphere of curiosity creates a sense of wonder in the children, who are compelled to help their giraffe friend with her ethical dilemma by actively exchanging on the elements that will most help her make a constructive choice. To create these kinds of settings and exchanges, the author must become affectively invested in her own wide-ranging interests as a philosophically curious person in order to reflect the nuances of conceptual thinking while also being attuned to the existential impact of these interests so as to breed an affective atmosphere of genuine infectious, passionate inquiry in her

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<sup>19</sup> Lipman, 1996: 54.



characters. In other words, through her writing, the author is not only modelling thinking but also modelling affect by embodying a certain orientation toward philosophical thought that reveals its potential for deep meaning and intersubjectivity. This affective investment is rendered all the more valuable for the author because the modelling is crafted with children's fulfillment in mind: as Lipman writes, "The ability of children to become such [thinking] people depends considerably on the availability of models—even fictional models—with which to identify."<sup>20</sup>

Yet while the creation and manipulation of curiosity-as-affect in children like the *Nous* example seems like a relatively benign goal, to be effective, the author of the philosophical novel must make creative and pedagogical choices throughout the writing process that affirm certain values, viewpoints and lifestyles at the expense of others. Accordingly, the author may be producing unintended affects—estrangement, apprehension, inhibition—that can detract from the original purpose of the story as a dialogue stimulus. Though the authoring of philosophical novels is seemingly immune to the neoliberal grip affecting other professions and industries, it is not invulnerable to exploitative inclinations as an affect-laden process. Whereas artists tend to have *carte blanche* when expressing their own ideas about reality, as evidenced by literary classics in which novelists paint a particular picture of the world to give voice to their existential experience, the author of the philosophical novel carries the pedagogical burden of inclusiveness and impartiality, making her affective investment all the more exacting. Put another way, the novel cannot be a vehicle for the author's voice alone but one that encompasses as many types of experiences as possible in order for curiosity-as-affect to spark interest in "life"

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<sup>20</sup> Lipman, 1988: 95.

broadly construed, rather than a handful of particular interpretations. This is a tall order, to be sure, especially since the scenarios devised by the adult author are meant to be mirroring the experiences of children. In a critique of P4C narratives, Karin Murriss expresses concern over Lipman's celebration of the child as a special kind of philosopher:

Even in P4C there seems to be little critical awareness of how narratives teach children how to be childlike...Texts written for children are not only didactic when they encourage children to behave like sensible or thoughtful adults, but in an even more dangerously subtle way, they legitimize and encourage children to behave in a way that—according to some—is 'natural' to children.<sup>21</sup>

Through the affect of curiosity, the author of philosophical novels affirms a specific take on the values of inquiry, reasoning and deliberation, thus encouraging particular conceptions of growth and self-affirmation in children as beings capable of eventual self-determination. This excludes the still popular traditional conceptions of children as empty vessels ready to absorb their culture's heritage from knowledgeable elders—perhaps a reason why Harry Stottlemeier's *Discovery* garnered so much resistance in the United States when it was first published, with bumper stickers adamantly demanding "Get Harry Out of Our Schools!"<sup>22</sup> Clearly, the virtue of autonomous thinking based in critical reasoning is not uniformly prized and, in clashing with different cultures and mindsets, can become exploitative and alienating for subsets of society that perceive childhood and education differently. In a sense, because of the affective investment required in writing a philosophical novel aimed at supporting children's intellectual, creative and moral growth, the author inevitably depicts her young characters incarnating values which she herself endorses—a tendency that is expected, even

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<sup>21</sup> Murriss, 2012.

<sup>22</sup> Gregory, 2011: 202.



revered, in novelists but viewed with suspicion in curriculum writers whose impartiality is stipulated. As David Kennedy writes, the Lipmanian novel presents “one mind ventriloquizing” with the explicit intention of provoking children’s philosophical reflection.<sup>23</sup>

One alternative to this adult ventriloquist problem has been to have children write (or contribute to writing) philosophical texts themselves.<sup>24</sup> The writing process is thought to help children deepen their philosophical understanding while the resulting “affect” is deemed more authentic since it evades the adult-writing-as-child predicament. Yet if the philosophical novel is supposed to model genuine childlike dialogue as well as symbolize the major philosophical ideas of intellectual history, it seems inevitable that an adult with philosophical knowledge will have to enter the equation eventually. Given the affectivity inherent in the writing work, questions about intentionality become crucial: Who should write philosophical novels? What should their qualifications be? Whose voices should they represent? What parts of the philosophical canon should be stressed? How should they view and treat their youthful audience? Who benefits from the novels? Who is unwittingly ostracized?<sup>25</sup> For instance, in his account of Guatemalan children reading Harry Stottlemeier’s *Discovery*, Keith L. Raitz references some arguments against the uncritical use of “Harry’s Gringo brand of critical thinking” since it risks further oppressing countries still

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<sup>23</sup> Kennedy, 1992: 54.

<sup>24</sup> For instance, the Association Québécoise de Philosophie pour Enfants (AQPE) showcases a variety of “stimulus” materials designed to encourage dialogue through a by-youth-for-youth approach. Some of these youth-generated stimulus materials can be found on the website of the Association Québécoise de Philosophie pour Enfants at <http://edupsy.uqac.ca/aqpe/> (French only).

<sup>25</sup> Interestingly, these questions arise not only for the authors of original philosophical novels but also for those in charge of translating existing novels. Didier Dupont describes the attention to detail required to maintain the affective purpose of Lipman’s novel *Lisa* in the French translation, while making editorial choices to render certain scenarios more relatable for children growing up in France. Dupont, 1987: 20-23.

recuperating from colonial legacies and in need of more culturally relevant narratives.<sup>26</sup>

To avoid exploitative leanings, the author of philosophical novels must continuously evaluate her dual writing purpose—narrative/expository, artistic/pedagogic—to help ensure against a hidden curriculum that presupposes certain ideas about childhood, education and individual fulfillment. Her pedagogical integrity and expertise in showcasing philosophical themes worth exploring must be balanced by the artistry of creating multidimensional characters, settings and situations that problematize these themes through a plurality of considerations accounting for the diversity of cultures, traditions and values of an ever globalizing world. The author's own affective experience as novelist and curriculum writer, with motivations stemming from both personal philosophical interest and pedagogical commitments to children's multidimensional thinking, must inform the stories so as to provide intellectual guidance through affective engagement. In short, the author faces the significant challenge of maintaining authenticity in her creative purpose while upholding her responsibility to the child reader. The weight of this affective investment points to the urgency of having myriad authors share the task of writing many and varied philosophical novels in the same spirit of curiosity and with the same dual commitment to modelling thinking and affect. Just as Hardt and Negri describe their own work as one mere foray into an extensive investigation requiring scores of voices, the philosophical novel necessitates many dedicated enthusiasts to enrich it.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Raitz, 1992: 7.

<sup>27</sup> Hard and Negri write: "It is impossible for any text to account adequately for all the real differences that characterize our various social contexts: geographical differences, racial differences, gender differences, and so forth. We think nonetheless that such attempts can play an important role in pushing knowledge and



So like all affective labour, the authoring of philosophical novels is an opportunity amidst risk: the affective investment it requires can result in narratives that are exploitative or alienating if the balance between artistic and pedagogical purposes is not met or if the diversity of philosophical orientations is neglected. Still, its liberating potential lies in the commitments it fosters: in creating curiosity-as-affect, the author prioritizes her readers' growth, realizing a special type of affective communication with them by crafting an alluring, engaging and transformative series of virtual encounters that model collective meaning construction. This process can be seen as enabling "autonomous circuits of valorization" since it occasions different ways of thinking and valuing that impact the power to act and be affected. Unlike many other affective labourers, the author can experience her work as being intrinsically as well as instrumentally valuable. For these reasons, the authoring of affect through philosophical novels may constitute an instance of positive, productive affective labour that "directly constructs a relationship"<sup>28</sup> through unifying rather than divisive features, laying the groundwork for facilitating affect through a community of philosophical inquiry.

### **III. Facilitating affect—the community of philosophical inquiry**

If the philosophical novel represents the authoring of affect, then the community of philosophical inquiry (CPI) symbolizes the transformation of affect through intersubjectivity. What the author produces through her writing experience—curiosity-as-affect within virtual encounters between fictional

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debate forward by striving to think the common framework within which these various differences act and exist." Hardt and Negri, 2004: 236.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid: 147.

youth—leaps off the page to find its new home in a live dialogue between children supported by a philosophical facilitator. As an extension of the discussion of affective labour's liberating potential, this section will focus on what the worker produces—the character and purpose of the affects generated by the novels and enlivened by the children's dialogue as a CPI. At its core, a CPI consists of a group of individuals joined by a contestable question they deem central to their lives and about which they seek clarity and reasonable judgments through structured conversation. From an affective viewpoint, it can be seen as the coming together of learning bodies in a “collision” of powers to act and be affected. The process begins with a communal reading of the philosophical novel: for Lipman, the act of reading an extract aloud reflects “turn-taking as a division of labour” with the “ethical implications of alternating reading and listening,” while enabling in children the “internalization of the thinking behaviours of the fictional characters” and the meanings of the themes they explore.<sup>29</sup> With curiosity-as-affect peaked, the children formulate philosophical questions inspired by the novel's most intriguing themes, then proceed to discuss possible answers, collectively identifying reasons, assumptions, examples, criteria and consequences to refine their hypotheses. In doing so, the children can actualize the novel's plurality of voices, transforming the overarching affect of curiosity into a dynamic affective atmosphere of openness, cooperation and interdependence.

As products of affective labour, curiosity-as-affect and the intersubjective CPI experience seem far more promising than many of the immaterial “goods” created through economically driven work since they encourage the kind of internally motivated, reason-driven actions that Spinoza advocates by increasing both autonomy and receptivity. First, as Lipman emphasizes, the philosophical

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<sup>29</sup> Lipman, 1996: 124.



novels themselves are “precious commodities” and “spiritual goods” for children.<sup>30</sup> Danish educator Ingrid Norholm recounts the positive experience of teaching her student Henrik to read using Lipman’s novel *Kio and Gus*: “He loved Gus and thought that Kio was very proud. Sometimes we had to read the same page several times because he thought it was so lovely.”<sup>31</sup> Similarly, Karen Lee stresses the relatability of Lipman’s novel *Mark* based on her facilitation of a P4C program in a Hawaiian youth correctional facility. One teenager’s comment reveals the “early and easy identification” of the group with issues like freedom and violence: “The class is real interesting. We were talking about this one story in that book that’s designed to have questions no matter how intelligent you think you are.”<sup>32</sup> So the sharing of the narrative itself can serve as a source of motivation, empowerment or encouragement to explore, uphold or affirm a certain kind of agency, value set or belief system that is seen as socially or relationally constructive.

But how can a CPI be “read” as evidence of the philosophical novel’s success at enhancing the power to act and be affected? Many theorists agree that affects are notoriously hard to assess since, unlike emotions, they exist as pre-individualized, unmeasurable states. As Wissinger notes,

Affect is social in that it constitutes a contagious energy, an energy that can be whipped up or dampened in the course of interaction...The effects of affect, however, are not predictable; affective change from passivity to activity, from inertia to motivation, for example, is not reducible to a single stimulus. In fact, a ‘circus of affective responses’ can result from a single stimulus and differ in any one body at different times.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Lipman’s description of philosophical novels as immaterial goods is quite telling: “They are the kinds of goods we deprive no one of when we make them our own. Children love the fictional characters in the stories they read: They appropriate them as friends — as half-imaginary companions. By giving children stories to appropriate and meanings to share, we provide children with other worlds to live in — other realms in which to dwell.” Ibid: 36.

<sup>31</sup> Norholm, 1985: 32.

<sup>32</sup> Lee, 1986: 15.

<sup>33</sup> Clough and Halley, eds., 2007: 232.

And so, the impact of a philosophical novel's virtual encounters—and curiosity-as-affect as the overarching immaterial “good” of this affective labour—can instead be gauged by the engagement level of children in their CPI dialogue. As mentioned, Hardt and Negri focus on affective labour to decipher people's capacity for democracy within the skill-sets and inclinations it fosters. In their view, since affective labour produces social capacities by enhancing communications, relationships and collective action, it can be interpreted as forming the framework for a “multitude” capable of both autonomy and commonality—“singularities that act in common.”<sup>34</sup> Similarly, a CPI can be “read” as facilitating the same capacities through affective thinking, revealing its potential as a type of “biopower from below.”

Hardt and Negri contend that the future of democracy in a globalizing world depends on re-conceiving the networking of human populations as “a multitude of bodies that decides.”<sup>35</sup> Rather than force sameness and uniformity, the multitude prizes the different potentialities of its subjects and “acts on the basis of what the singularities share in common.”<sup>36</sup> Likewise, a CPI purposely evades homogeneity by eschewing the traditional paradigm of the teacher as an expert forcing consensus on the class through a demonstration of the “right” answers. Instead, the community of inquirers is co-responsible for establishing common ground by intertwining their individual perspectives and convictions, and locating shared aims. Lipman's own answer to developing the dual capacity of autonomy and commonality is a reflective model of education that cultivates independent thinking within a setting of mutual accountability. Children in a CPI “form their own understanding of the world, and develop their own conceptions of the sorts of persons they want to be”<sup>37</sup> by collectively reflecting on what matters to them most. Accordingly, their kind of

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<sup>34</sup> Hardt and Negri, 2004: 105.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid: 243.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid: 100.

<sup>37</sup> Lipman, 2003: 25.



autonomy can be deemed relational since it escapes both hyper-individualism and heteronomy. Matthew Schertz's description of the CPI as dialogical pedagogy captures its affective promise:

It is a place of 'lived difference' where the 'thematized subject' is challenged through intersubjective mediation. Within the dialogical encounter our bodies kinesthetically, vocally and aurally meet, which establishes an affective exchange while simultaneously providing a place for increased cognition and metacognition...the communal pursuit of knowledge actualized within Community of Inquiry promotes a gestalt phenomenon that allows participating subjectivities to collectively mediate, connect, challenge and reconstruct themselves.<sup>38</sup>

The transformation of affect from an atmosphere of curiosity to one of intersubjective wonder and deliberation requires the development of affective thinking skills in children. Lipman shares Spinoza's ideas about reason being affectively charged but also vulnerable to irrational passions. By learning to conquer unreasonable judgments through their stronger, bolder affects—namely, “their natural love of meaning, their desire for understanding, their feeling for wholeness”<sup>39</sup>—children in a CPI can further enhance their capacity for autonomy and commonality. The fusion of cognitive and affective orientations reveals itself in the children's mental acts of “doubting, wondering, fearing, hoping, admiring, respecting, and believing.”<sup>40</sup> Further, as Juliana Merçon writes, participatory dialogue based in reasonableness can heighten agency: “through thinking together and being open to different ideas we are less passive. Since reason can only be produced as a result of affects, in other words, since reason is always affective, our openness to being affected by others is a necessary condition for self and communal empowerment.”<sup>41</sup>

Of course, as with the authoring of affect through philosophical novels, the facilitating of affect through a CPI also presents an opportunity amidst risk. Lipman

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<sup>38</sup> Schertz, 2006: 9.

<sup>39</sup> Lipman, Sharp and Oscanyan, 1980: 185.

<sup>40</sup> Lipman, 1988: 95.

<sup>41</sup> Merçon, 2007: 224.

recognizes that “the different opinions that are expressed are charged with personal feelings, and as more and more views are brought forth, these differences of feeling are accentuated.”<sup>42</sup> While this accentuation can be extremely positive, with children becoming more aware through their affective responses of what they care about and value, it also risks becoming exploitative and alienating, with stronger personalities eclipsing more timid ones, “majority rule” judgments hindering rigorous analysis, and prejudiced outlooks being forcefully defended as more equitable suggestions get overlooked. In such cases, the affective atmosphere of openness, cooperation and interdependence facilitated by the philosophical novel is supplanted by one of coercion, hostility and one-sidedness. Lee confirms this danger in her examples of P4C with juvenile delinquents, noting the influence of “bullies” on the group’s ability to share control of the discussion’s progress.<sup>43</sup>

To preserve the opportunity of intersubjectivity in spite of these risks, the philosophical facilitator is thus critical to a CPI’s success in fostering autonomy and commonality. By its very nature, facilitation should not be exploitative or alienating since its role is to strengthen curiosity-as-affect by creating an accompanying affect of mutual trust and ease regarding the inquiry process. Within a CPI, the facilitator wants to extend the modelling of thinking and affect originating in the philosophical novel by crafting what Kennedy calls a “space of interrogation.”<sup>44</sup> In this space, children can develop a self-corrective practice as inquirers by cultivating an attitude of lived doubt—a deliberate hesitancy regarding their ideas in an effort to remain openminded to the ideas of others. This affective atmosphere of “epistemological modesty” is characterized by comfort with uncertainty, acceptance of fallibility, and

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<sup>42</sup> Lipman, 1988: 129.

<sup>43</sup> Lee, 1986: 15-16.

<sup>44</sup> Kennedy, 1999: 340.



resistance to bias.<sup>45</sup> Hannu Juuso & Timo Laine emphasize the importance of this child-adult dynamic in keeping the CPI affectively supportive:

An educational space is always a human space. So it is not just a matter of the furnishings, size or lighting of the classroom, but above all a matter of the social mood in that space. Corporeality and experience of space entwined with other people, the atmosphere, mood, are non-intellectual aspects of the pedagogical relationship...the generally supportive mood experienced by a child gives rise to unique sentient feelings in him or her in relation to the people which whom s/he is involved in a pedagogical relationship. Both the child and the adult are supported by this general mood, and...they both in turn actively create more of this encompassing atmosphere.<sup>46</sup>

In essence, once enlivened in a CPI, the product of the affective labouring of philosophical novels—curiosity-as-affect—can be transformed into a multifaceted atmosphere of intersubjectivity through affective thinking coupled with supportive facilitation. The élan of the novels can spur the children's power to act and be affected within cooperative dialogue, turning them into a mini "multitude"-in-the-making defined by autonomy and commonality. The implications of the philosophical novel as affective labour thus includes the possibility of "biopower from below" because children in a CPI can create new ways of being, interacting, sharing and converging through their shared quest for meaning.

## Conclusion

In closing, as a positive instance of affective labour in both process and delivery, the philosophical novel can engage the author, facilitator and child inquirer in an intrinsically valuable kind of work with worthwhile implications. The author's experience of affective investment and the CPI's experience of affective response reveal the liberating potential of affective labour that Hardt and Negri extol in their

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<sup>45</sup> Gregory, 2008.

<sup>46</sup> Their account borrows from the educational philosophy of Otto Friedrich Bollnow. Juuso and Laine, 2005: 12.

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concept of the multitude: autonomy that is relational in its celebration of commonality. Though the opportunity for liberation inevitably exists amidst risk of exploitation and alienation, its potential in an progressive education movement like the Philosophy for Children program is hard to deny.<sup>47</sup> As Lipman writes, the role of the philosophical novel in P4C is comparable to the ecological supports needed for the evolution of new forms of life—“thinking needs a habitat to facilitate its development.”<sup>48</sup> Moreover, the authoring and facilitating of affect through the philosophical novel introduce a new kind of “biopower from below” that can contribute to Hardt and Negri’s burgeoning conception of political love in a globalizing world—“a love that loves the stranger, a love that functions through the play of differences, rather than the insistence on the same.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> This potential also calls for investigation into other educational programs where affective labour is more promising in its ethical implications. As one pair of critical pedagogues write, “If affective labour can be defined as the production of knowledge, attitudes and dispositions, it should be clear that teaching is itself a form of affective labour, a relatively privileged form, since it retains a self-directed, creative aspect.” Gallagher and Alexander, 2008: 123.

<sup>48</sup> Lipman, 2003: 157.

<sup>49</sup> Schwartz, 2009: 813.



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