

Transcript of a Philosophy for Children Discussion

INTRODUCTION

This Introduction is provided in order to enable readers of the transcript and viewers of the video tape¹ to understand as fully as possible the dynamics of this philosophical discussion by children. The tape and its transcript show the children observing a number of very specific procedures which they developed as part of their program in Philosophy for Children over a period of two years. These procedures, intended to increase the likelihood of productive philosophical discussion, are *invisible*; therefore, in order to permit the readers and viewers to be aware of what to look for, the invisible structure is here made visible. To read the transcript or see the video without an awareness of these procedures is to risk seriously misunderstanding this sample of a children's philosophical discussion.²

It should be emphasized that this is one example of a way to develop the art of productive philosophical discussion with children. It is not being advocated as "the" way to do it. Those who have tried to engage in philosophical discussions with children will attest to the complexity of the activity; this is but one attempt to sort out the problems involved in order to enable the children to have discussions which are philosophically as rich as possible.

Nor is this sample being offered as a "finished product". Rather it is a stopping place on a continuing journey; it is as far as we got in one particular group. Built-in to the process is an inherent dissatisfaction, a continual search for better ways to do it. It must be said, nevertheless, that what is represented here is at the very least an interesting example of what is possible even if, perhaps, not desirable in every respect.

This video tape shows a student-led discussion on the subject of rights in general and children's rights in particular. It is the children's second discussion on the subject of 'rights' and their third session with a student discussion leader. The participants are twenty-six Grade Six students (ages 11 and 12) and the tape was recorded in May 1983 when the children were completing their second year in the Philosophy for Children program. Although they were accustomed to visitors, they had never had a discussion taped before and they did not know in advance that this session would be taped.

Physical Arrangement of the Class

The children are seated at their desks which are arranged in what we call the "Big Square". It is only a square if the number of children is large; otherwise we make it into a circle. We have found this to be the most satisfactory arrangement since it permits everyone to sit comfortably on chairs, to see everyone else easily, to have a surface for

writing and it allows for inevitable fidgeting with minimum distraction. The main disadvantages of this arrangement are that the children are distant from each other and there is a certain formality to the setting. In our experience, the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

"Dialogue Procedure"

"Dialogue Procedure" is the name I have given to the practice in discussion of engaging each contributor in dialogue about the point they wish to make before going on to another contributor. This is done by using what later come to be known as "Discussion 'Moves'" — questions such as "What do you mean by that?" which are put to the contributor in order to explore fully the point she/he is trying to make or to ensure that its intended meaning is clear.

The dialogue procedure is explained explicitly to the children before our first discussion so that they know what to expect when they make their contributions. We talk about the fact that merely expressing an idea (no matter how well) may not necessarily ensure that that idea is clearly understood by others. It is important, therefore, to check that out and the leader can do that on behalf of the other members of the group. The children learn to expect the ball to go back and forth a few times before their idea is accepted. After some experience with it, this procedure becomes practically second-nature to them and they learn to be selective about its use.

"Discussion Discussions"

After considerable experience in the program, the children's attention is drawn to the actual mechanics of discussion. This is done through periodic "Discussion Discussions" during which the children examine their own discussions in an effort to determine what makes them go well or what prevents them from being productive. They develop specific procedures and lists of guidelines which are derived entirely from reflection on their own experience. As a result, motivation to adhere to them tends to be high.

"Name Recorder" Procedure

One major difficulty in having productive discussions is determining who gets to contribute when. Although we have not solved the problem to our satisfaction, our Discussion Discussion deliberations have enabled us to develop a "Name Recorder" procedure, a procedure which helps more than it hinders.

The person to the right of the discussion leader acts as name recorder for the group. His/her job is simply to list the names of would-be contributors on a first-come-first-served basis. The leader then consults the list to determine who the next speaker should be. It seems a simple solution but it has its advantages and disadvantages and is often the focus of attention during Discussion Discussions.

The advantages are that overly enthusiastic and/or impatient hand-waving is eliminated allowing participants to settle into the discussion as it proceeds while they wait their turn knowing that, if time permits, they will be invited to speak. A second advantage is that it becomes possible to

balance first-time and multiple-time speakers. A third advantage is that it eliminates the necessity for timid contributors to have to “jump in” to an animated discussion; they will be invited to do so. A fourth advantage is that it encourages participants to wait their turn thus giving the speaker of the moment an opportunity to speak at whatever pace she/he chooses without having to worry about being interrupted.

One disadvantage is that a certain linear formality is imposed on the discussion. Speakers speak too much in turn and a certain desirable degree of cross-fire is virtually eliminated. This the contributors find hard to take sometimes. There is one clear instance of the children not being able to resist the temptation on the video but they soon bring themselves back to accepted procedure.

Another major disadvantage is that the order in which points are discussed is dependent on the order in which children indicate a desire to speak. It is not a procedure which allows for extended exploration of a particular idea before proceeding to the next. This disadvantage is clearly evident on the video.

Three Lists

By reflecting on their own discussions, the children generate three on-going lists which are intended to help their discussions to be as productive as possible.

1. “*Discussion Guidelines*” are ways in which all participants should behave in a discussion in order to maximize the chances for productivity. They are usually stated in behavioral terms and are stated as “Do’s” rather than “Don’ts”.

2. “*Discussion Moves*” are questions which A can ask B in order to explore B’s idea. The term “move” suggests a good move in a game and the idea here is for the children to learn specific ways to pay attention to what it is the *other* person is saying rather than (or in addition to) formulating their own ideas. It is a way of encouraging dialogue and of discouraging multiple monologues.

When modeling the dialogue procedure for the children, the teacher can make a conscious effort to use as many of these moves as possible without, at first, calling any particular attention to them. In this way they become a familiar part of the children’s discussion landscape. Then later it can become somewhat of a game to see how many they can identify and/or invent. Collecting them can be fun and using them in discussion is often acknowledged silently as if to say, “Good move”.

3. “*Leader Guidelines*” are generated only after the first two have been developed and put into practice for some time. The role of the leader is subjected to close scrutiny and it is common for the children to be enthusiastic about being the discussion leader. Their motivation, however, can sometimes be counterproductive. That is, often they want to be leader simply because it will give them more “air time”.

Should the leader be a participant like everyone else? The group shown on the video certainly thought so in many advance discussions. It was only when they tried it out that

they discovered that that was to give the leader an unfair advantage. Only then did they figure out ways the leader could participate in order to get the most out of the contributions of as many participants as possible. The idea is to find ways for the leader to act as discussion guide without dominating and thereby preventing others’ ideas from being expressed. What the leader is to do with his/her own ideas becomes an interesting problem and one solution is for the leader to express those ideas in the form of question.

Use of Examples

One skill the children demonstrate clearly on the video is that of offering examples to illustrate the points they are trying to make. Rarely do they simply make a generalization without backing it up with some sort of case worth considering. They have learned about three kinds of different cases they can use: model cases, borderline cases and contrary cases. These can be actual or invented and the children learn to look at them to find out what sort of helpful characteristics they reveal.

Fictional Characters

When giving examples, whether hypothetical or ‘real life’, the children have learned to conceal the identity of people in their stories. When they do this they are drawing attention to the point of the story rather than to the people in it. This is particularly useful when they want to relate something from their own experience — experience which may include episodes they have had with each other. One male and one female fictional character is decided upon at the beginning of the year and this is done by giving them names which are not likely to be encountered by the children in real life. (The fictional characters can then be ascribed any characteristics needed for a given example and after some time it is as if they become members of the group.)

Occasionally the children will give other names to their characters as is seen several times on the video. And often the real identities of the fictional characters will be obvious to everyone. What is important is that by using fictional characters, it becomes clearly understood that attention should be paid not to the identity of the characters but to the point being made.

Note-taking

Many discussions benefit from the keeping of a visual tracing of progress and at first the teacher can show how this is done by recording ideas on large chart paper. Gradually the children are encouraged to keep notes themselves. It helps avoid unnecessary repetition and at the same time it can result in the production of ideas which might not otherwise become apparent. Another use of the notebooks is to allow the children to record ideas they are waiting to express so that they won’t forget them.

There is a danger that note-taking will hinder discussion so it must be handled with care. For example, some silent participants can take refuge in note-taking feeling that they are participating legitimately (which indeed they are). It is when the note-taking takes the place of active oral participation, or when it in fact prevents it, that it is worrying. It

is for this reason that it must be stressed —repeatedly — that the note-taking should only be a focus of attention to the extent that it contributes to the discussion.

Structure of the Lesson

The lesson on the video has five different phases.

First, there is a brief “warm-up” by the teacher during which questions relating to rights in general are raised. It is a way of getting the juices running, as it were, and is limited to a few introductory minutes.

Second, the teacher pauses to invite students to volunteer to lead the discussion and to choose the name recorder. We have procedures for choosing from volunteers but these were not followed in the video in order to permit the choice of a student leader most likely to succeed. (Actually, this can be very difficult to predict accurately. It is not uncommon for children who rarely, if ever, participate in discussions to volunteer to lead them, and they often do so amazingly well.) In this video, Joanna is spontaneously chosen from among volunteers. There had only been two student leaders before Joanna so the experience is a relatively new one both for her and for the group. She had no specific coaching for this particular discussion so her behavior as leader is attributable primarily to her experience in the program and in the “Discussion Discussions”. Instructions are given to Joanna so that she will know when and how to draw the discussion to a close.

Third, the discussion begins.

Fourth, with about ten minutes remaining, Joanna closes the discussion and invites people to engage in what we call “Free Discussion”. It often happens that time runs out on a discussion before everyone has had a chance to have a say. This can be frustrating in the extreme and so we sometimes leave time for a quick “free discussion” at the end in order to allow people to say what they were dying to say to whomever they wish. On the video, the “free discussion” is a little more boisterous than usual (though not much) because of the need to release the tension produced by the presence of the camera. They do, however, manage to continue the discussion.

Finally, as promised at the beginning of the lesson, the children are asked for any “tentative conclusions” they were able to identify from the discussion. Joanna is asked for her perception first because as leader, she had to refrain from participating in the same way as the others. She was offered the opportunity to see what she was able to pull out of the discussion. The identification of “tentative conclusions” is one way of emphasizing the notion that a successful philosophical discussion is one in which identifiable progress is made. It may not, however, be the best way because it can seem repetitive; often the children prefer to continue the discussion itself.

A Concern from the Children

Immediately after the taping and later, when the children saw themselves on tape, some were concerned about some of the thoughts which they had expressed during the discussion. They would like readers and viewers to know that their ideas are not carved in stone and that they were themselves

sometimes surprised at where the discussion led them. We talked about how one of the purposes of discussions such as these was to work on ideas and that that work often reveals that there is more to do. We also talked about what it is to “think on your feet” — especially on camera. Their thoughts may not be carved in stone, but they are on tape. It is hoped that readers and viewers will keep in mind that what they are seeing is but a philosophical moment.

A Concern from the Teacher

The making of this transcript has been a revelation in many respects — one of which is not at all comfortable. It is often startling to hear oneself on tape and seeing oneself on video can be even more so; but neither can compare with the reading of a verbatim transcript of what one has said. It seems that the rules of grammar have limited application in speech and this, on reflection, I take to be a function of trying to utter one thought while at the same time generating others. Often the first will give way “mid-sentence” to subsequent thoughts with the result being disjointed, inarticulate speech. The children’s interventions also illustrate this same phenomenon. It is hard, it seems, to think and talk at the same time!

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What follows is a verbatim transcript of the video tape. Explanatory information is included in italics.

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Transcript of a Philosophy for Children Discussion

Subject: Children’s Rights

- 1. **Teacher:** We, um, we didn’t have a long time to discuss it, but did we establish anything? . . . Mark?
- 2. **Mark:** We said the difference between rights that should be and rights that are.
- 3. **Teacher:** O.K. Um. (*Writes on the blackboard*) I’ll just put “should be” and “are” just to remind ourselves. It’s easy to say what rights should be. It’s not so easy to say whether they are or not.

Now, what are some of the questions that we can ask about rights? Like, it looks from your silence as though we didn’t really establish a whole lot last time. Maybe we will today. And at the end of today’s session what I am going to ask are for some, what we call, “tentative conclusions”. (*Blackboard: “Tentative Conclusions”*) That means, so far what have we figured out! A conclusion is what you end up with; but we call them “tentative” because they may not stay that way. If we think about it further, if we discuss it further, we may want to change the conclusion a little or a lot. So at the end, we’ll see if we can pull out some

(To Joanna) Watch the clock and when we're coming close to twenty-five after, just say, "Two more speakers or one more speaker," — whatever you think we'll have time for.

16. **Joanna:** Okay.
17. **Teacher:** At twenty-five after, we'll have a five-minute free discussion where, if you didn't get a chance to say something, you can find somebody to say it to. And at half past, we'll stop that and see if out of the two kinds of discussions we've managed to get some, any tentative conclusions.
18. **Joanna:** Okay. I think maybe we should start with children's rights. Because last time we were covering a lot of things, okay? So if anybody has anything to say about that, you can just raise your hand.³ ... Okay, Ashleigh.
19. **Ashleigh:** Um, if someone, let's say someone thinks that um something is right, then that, let's say an adult or something, and then uh there's someone, uh, a kid or something, they think that it isn't right. Like they, they think that their thing is right. So I think if, if they, if they feel it's right then they should have the chance like ...
20. **Joanna:** So, are you talking about like good/right? Or are you talking about rights that you have?⁴
21. **Ashleigh:** Well, rights that you have because we should have rights also.
22. **Joanna:** So what, what you're saying is that kids they have diff ...
23. **Ashleigh:** They may have different rights.
24. **Joanna:** They might have different views upon what the rights should be.
25. **Ashleigh:** Yeah.
26. **Joanna:** Okay. Uh, Belinda.
27. **Belinda:** I think that, okay, well, rights have a lot to do also with trust because if a child has a right to do something, like, just say a child eleven or twelve just say to make themselves lunch, right? And their mother tells them specifically to make ... I dunno ... a ham sandwich ... but then they come home and they make what they like, they make a peanut butter sandwich. If the mother finds out, then she knows that she can't really trust the child to make the right sandwich so that their right to make their own sand-

ideas that we, we've really sort of worked this out.

Now. What are rights? What are some of the questions that we could ask about them?

4. **Fiona:** Do you grow with a right? Or, how do you get a right?
5. **Teacher:** Okay, where do they come from? (*Writes on board but erases: "where"*) ... I like it your way better. How do you get a right? How do (*Writes: How do people get rights?*) ... Alright? Anything else? Belinda?
6. **Belinda:** Um, I don't know, but how 'bout, What is the difference between a privilege and a right?
7. **Teacher:** Okay. Compare ... When you want to write compare in a short way, you can write "cf". I don't know what that stands for. Maybe we can find that out. Compare privilege. Alright. Very ... very good move ... is to take something that's close to the one you're looking at, see what's the same and what's different. [...] that's a very good one. Alison?
8. **Alison:** Um. How do you know if it's a right?
9. **Teacher:** How do you know a right when you see one? ... (*Several students raise their hands.*) Mark?
10. **Mark:** How to establish a right.
11. **Teacher:** Say again?
12. **Mark:** How do you get a right, how do you establish a right?
13. **Teacher:** How to establish a right. Okay. That's different from how people get them. It's how to ... how to ... You know, you know a 'should' and you want to make it an 'are'. Okay. How are rights established?
Okay. I don't want to take up all the time with these questions because we could make the whole session be um just questions ... You may think of others and you can raise them in the discussion when we're having it. Um. And at the end we'll have, we'll see if we come to any tentative conclusions for any of these questions that we have here.
Um, I would prefer if the discussion were led by one of you. Is there any brave soul who would like to give it a try? Um? Let's see. (*Several students raise their hands.*) ... Joanna? Do you want a try?
14. **Joanna:** Okay.
15. **Teacher:** Okay. Sitting to your right is Lisa. Lisa, would you like to record names for us today? [...] Is there paper behind you there?

- wich should sort of is gone — sort of.
- 28. Joanna:** So, what you're saying is that you have to be mature enough to handle the rights that you get.
- 29. Belinda:** Yeah.
- 30. Joanna:** And they have to be able to trust them in that way.
- 31. Belinda:** Right.
- 32. Joanna:** Okay. Marnie.
- 33. Marnie:** I think that children have just as much, many rights as adults do. Like if, let's say, I remember on our stencil we had an example that said, if the whole family, like the whole Brown family, is eating, does Lucy Brown have the, have a right to eat?⁵ And that's a good example because of course she has a right. She, she has a right to live which means she can't starve which means she has a right to eat with her family. But, let's say the mother says, um, "Go to bed without supper." I think still she has a right to eat because she has a right to live. And that's like, if you don't eat, you could starve to death. And people have rights to live and they have, people have rights to freedom and everything. So I think that children have the exact same rights as parents, as adults do.
- 34. Joanna:** But where do they get these rights?
- 35. Marnie:** Maybe they got them ... I don't know where they could get them. It could just ... I don't know. I think sometimes they're just, you just, they're just ... there.
- 36. Joanna:** Okay. Okay, Mark.
- 37. Mark:** Um, I think that children do not have enough rights and adults have too much. Such as, just the um, this year there's been a, there's been a law passed only in Montreal that games, uh video games can only be played by eighteen-year-olds and over. Now, I was just thinking. What, what can grownups play video games and kids can't? Because grownups what what what happens to grownups that doesn't happen to kids? Such as like, uh, like um, I think that, uh, what was I going to say? I was thinking that grownups, why do grownups get to play video games and kids can't? What happens to them that doesn't happen to us? What happens to us that doesn't happen to them?
- 38. Joanna:** Okay, but, remember what Belinda said, that you have to be mature enough so they don't waste all their money on them.
- 39. Mark:** Yeah but what happens if we waste all our money on them or adults waste all their money on them?
- 40. Joanna:** Okay.
- 41. Mark:** I think that ah, cuz you know like ah smoking you ah adults get so much right to smoke, like they're allowed destroying their lungs and we're not ... there's a lot of things. They're allowed going to see um Raid-⁶ um movies about violence and we're not, we see sometimes uh we see our friends fighting and everything but uh we're not allowed going to movies to see it and they're allowed. Like why are they allowed to see a movie that has violence when we when we are not ... when we see violence just as much as they do all around us?
- 42. Joanna:** Okay, so you're saying that kids don't have enough rights and adults can do what they want ...
- 43. Mark:** No, I think adults have maybe too much rights and kids don't have enough.
- 44. Joanna:** Okay, so if anyone disagrees with Mark, [...] Dawn.
- 45. Dawn:** Um, I'm going to use my model case um that I made up yesterday ... the other day. Um, say a girl or a boy, let's say Hilda,⁷ gets adopted ... or just born, it doesn't really matter. Um, and uh, his/her parents or Hilda's parents um they they decide to keep the baby or to just adopt it, it all depends on if they're adopting it or having it. And um, then Hilda's mother and father mistreat her and don't give her that many breaks. And sort of just don't let her have dinner and um slap her around and stuff. Um, I think that's very bad because ... in the parents' case ... well, I think it's very bad for the parents to mistreat her. If they wanted Hilda so much, why, why did, why don't they um treat her the way that she's supposed to — they're supposed to?
- 46. Joanna:** So, so are you saying that Hilda has the right to be treated correctly?
- 47. Dawn:** Only bec ... yeah, has the right because she was had or adopted.
- 48. Joanna:** Okay, what if they had the child and didn't want her?
- 49. Dawn:** Well then they would just put her up, him or her up for adoption.
- 50. Joanna:** So you're saying that anyone who has a child and doesn't want it should put it up for adoption.
- 51. Dawn:** Pardon me?
- 52. Joanna:** You're saying anyone who has a child, doesn't want it, should put it up for adoption.
- 53. Dawn:** Well, uh, even if you don't want it and you

- can't put it up for adoption, it's still good to treat, it's still the best thing to treat the child the best way because after all, it is a human being.
- 54. Joanna:** So it's a right. They have the right to be treated correctly. Why do you think they have this right and where did they get it?
- 55. Dawn:** Well, um, . . .
- 56. Joanna:** Is it written down in a book or is it just . . . there?
- 57. Dawn:** It's . . . just there.
- 58. Joanna:** Okay, so nobody's really too sure about that. Let's see if . . . Deena . . . can clear it up.
- 59. Deena:** Well, uh, . . . I do have a question. If your mother asks you to do something, and say you don't want to do it, do you have a right not to do it?
- 60. Joanna:** Okay, so you're saying, if you can — you should be able to make your own decisions. You have the right to make your own decisions. Is that what you're saying?
- 61. Deena:** Yeah.
- 62. Joanna:** Okay. Okay, let's see if Scott has an answer to the question.
- 63. Scott:** Um. Bringing up Deena's subject. You shouldn't have to do what you don't want to do. Cuz let's say your mother tells you to take out the garbage and you don't want to. You shouldn't have to do it. And . . .
- 64. Joanna:** Why?
- 65. Scott:** Well, cuz it's your life. She can't like, order you around to do everything.
- 66. Joanna:** Well, what about . . . they're giving you food and they have they it's your right to get food. And you're saying still you should be able to do what you want?
- 67. Scott:** Well, um, that's . . . it's true, you've got me there.
- 68. Joanna:** Okay.
- 69. Scott:** And, um, what Eric brought up on Monday, about um John killed Harry and Harry's brother killed John, um, John should be penalized and he shouldn't just be allowed to kill him cuz he has no right to live. They should both be sentenced.
- 70. Joanna:** Why?
- 71. Scott:** Cuz it's not right to take away a human life even if the person has killed somebody.
- 72. Joanna:** So you're saying, even if somebody has killed somebody else, and they have supposedly, by, this is Mark's idea, lost the right to live, then it still doesn't make up for the [. . .]
- 73. Scott:** Right.
- 74. Joanna:** Okay. Lisa.
- 75. Lisa:** I want to say something about kids and other kids. Say Henry has a little sister. Okay? And his little sister is always teasing him and his little sister knows that she is not going to get in trouble for it because um Henry's mother always says, um "She's littler than you are and you don't have the right to hit her. You know you're much bigger and you don't have to hit her." But say little sister bites Henry when he hurts her and Henry hits her back and then she hits him again but he doesn't want to do anything because the mother's there so the little sister starts kissing Henry and the mother walks in and . . . "Henry hit me!" and she's kissing Henry. So Henry gets in trouble and he has the right to disagree.
- 76. Joanna:** Okay. So you're saying that, . . . kids . . . shouldn't . . . just . . . um . . . with other kids . . . shouldn't have, shouldn't, shouldn't be like always friends. They should have the right to disagree and . . . stuff like that. But where did, where did these kids get their, their rights? Did they have rights written down in a book?
- 77. Lisa:** No, but . . . Well you see um the mother is sort of comparing the age . . . "You're old enough to know not to hit your little sister."
- 78. Joanna:** Okay. So you're saying, like Mark was saying, if you're older then you're supposed to, you're supposed to be more mature like Belinda was saying with her sandwich . . . um . . . so you're saying it it's . . . even if you're older, it's not necessarily . . . you have more rights than the person who's younger.
- 79. Lisa:** Sort of. And then say um Henry says, "Well, why can't I hit her back?" And um, the mother, and Henry's mother says, "Don't talk back to me, I fee- I feed you and everything. And you're not allowed to talk back to me because I'm older and I can tell you what to do."
- 80. Joanna:** So you're saying, older people think they have more rights than younger people.
- 81. Lisa:** Yeah, well, both really.
- 82. Joanna:** Okay. Um. Let's see. Um, Alison.
- 83. Alison:** Okay, um, I have two things to say. I think, Mark, I disagree and I agree because he was saying that older people they have like um they have the right to play games, video games, in the arcade, and we don't and the movies and all that. Well I agree and I disagree because like in the arcade I dis-

like I agree with him, why is it like that and it's like in the states, in Philadelphia it's okay, like everyone's free to go to the arcade. I ag- I agree with him; it's not exactly fair ... um ... and ... also in the movies well there ... like people are trying to stop violence and stuff like that so that's why our parents don't really want us to go see it. ... You know? Like they um they're trying to stop it and they don't want us to get into that like see all this violence ...

- 84. Mark:** That was just an example, I just wanted people to keep that in mind.
- 85. Alison:** I know. Yeah, but well, and I have, okay my idea is like when we run away, do you have a right to run away from home just because maybe, okay, maybe your parents are treating you wrong or something, but do you have a right to run away? ... Maybe ... if that's what you think, but um why is it like that um they think it's not a right to run away and you sort of do?
- 86. Joanna:** Okay ... Okay do you think then that kids should have rights written down?
- 87. Alison:** Well, no, because, ...
- 88. Joanna:** If they do or if they don't; because I think they do have rights written down — but, I'm not going to say anything.
- 89. Alison:** Well, ah, maybe they do; but I don't think in a book — maybe in their mind and they can sort of figure out, like Lisa said, figure out, and they're old enough and they're mature enough to figure out what their rights are, like to hit your sister, younger sister ...
- 90. Joanna:** Okay ... so they're ... rights are in people's minds ... is what you're saying.
- 91. Alison:** Yeah, I think, if they're mature enough ...
- 92. Joanna:** They're not written down anywhere, they're, they're writ — it's ... it's in your head.
- 93. Alison:** Maybe some rights are from the law and stuff like that, like stealing, you don't have a right to steal and, you know, stuff like that.
- 94. Joanna:** Okay. ... Marnie.
- 95. Marnie:** Okay. I just thought of two things. The thing that um what Scott said, I think that um ... that's the meaning of respect, in a way. You respect the ... you respect your parents and you sort of you sort of um in a way by doing the jobs that they ask you to do, by doing little odd jobs, odd jobs on the side, I think maybe in a way you're paying — you're you're thanking them sort of for feeding you and giving you clothes and everything. Like they don't, they don't have

to do that for you but they love you so obviously they are. They don't want you to run around and be cold and hungry. So in a way that's um that's a sort of respecting them by doing that, for them. ...

And last time in our discussion on Monday we brought up uh the right of freedom. Okay, in the movie that Fiona said, "The World According to Garp", he has a sex change and he becomes a woman. And he wants to adopt a child and they don't let him because of that sex change. I don't, I think, and also aside from that being ... I don't know what you want to call it ... Okay, ... he has a right to adopt a child. Maybe he didn't like his life as a man and he thought maybe he'd be better as a woman. So he has a right to have a sex change. And then he also has a right to adopt a child. That's another right of freedom. It's his free will to if he wants to adopt a child or have a sex change. And, you know, it's it's his own free will. Just like communists, they have no right to tell the people of their country that they have to stay in that country. And they uh they have no freedom of speech in communist countries. They can't tell anybody anything; if they do they they'll get tortured and slaughtered and everything. They have no right.

- 96. Joanna:** Okay.
- 97. Marnie:** I feel that everyone has the right to freedom in this world. And they should, they should have that right and they should, you know, they should use that right. And people shouldn't have to stop it. People shouldn't try and stop it.
- 98. Joanna:** Fiona.
- 99. Fiona:** Okay. Um, say there's uh two parents and they're getting a divorce and there's a little girl, say, named Ingrid and she's twelve or thirteen years old and they're going to court for a custody case seeing who's going to get the child. And, like, Ingrid doesn't really want to go with the father because the father, the father went away when she was about three and like she didn't really know her father so, she wanted to stay with her mother. And her, her, and the father won the case, she, like, he got to have the child. He got custody of the child and like, Ingrid didn't want to. I think Ingrid should have the choice, choosing what parent she wanted to live with and stay with, you know? Like who's her guardian or whatever.
- 100. Joanna:** Okay. So you think Ingrid has the right to decide ...

101. **Fiona:** Ingrid has the right, yeah.
102. **Joanna:** ... to decide herself ...
103. **Fiona:** uh huh
104. **Joanna:** ... instead of her parents. So you're ...
105. **Fiona:** Instead of the court.
106. **Joanna:** Instead of the court. So are you saying that any kid should have the right to decide what they want to do?
107. **Fiona:** Well, almost any kid. If there's say a kid who, who like, she doesn't really know what her father's like, say he takes drugs and he's really bad and she doesn't know that, the little kid doesn't know that and they're just trying to do what's right for the kid. You know, maybe the kid could get into drugs or something like that. Some, in some cases, like, if it's a baby, first, like, you can't, you can't he, she can't, he or she can't really choose so, then it's up to the court, but if if the child is, like, older, is old enough to choose, and if there's mothing wrong with the child, and, like, you now, she has her own, I think she has, like, the right to choose.
108. **Joanna:** So you say that kids should have the right to choose, what they want to do, if they're mature enough.
109. **Fiona:** Yeah.
110. **Joanna:** Like Belinda was saying with her sandwich, you should have to be old enough to, to have rights. ... But, does that mean that a baby has rights?
111. **Fiona:** Well, a baby has rights, like a right to baby food, or whatever, clothes, but, like, some rights they have, like, the baby would still have the right to choose what parent but the baby wouldn't know. The baby has a right but the baby's not old enough to handle that right. To ...
112. **Joanna:** Okay, so ... smaller kids, don't, probably don't have as many rights as older.
113. **Fiona:** Well, they have the right but they just ...
114. **Joanna:** ... but they just can't do it by themselves. Like Belinda was saying with having enough maturity. So does that mean when you say that adults have more rights than kids, it's because adults are more mature?
115. **Fiona:** Well, some adults don't have, like, don't have as many rights, like say there's a, I don't know, a bum on the street or something like that, like, and if he wants to go and get a job but he's all messy and dirty and dumb and, whatever, he has the, it's sort of, he has the right to go and get a job but people aren't really going to take him. Like,
116. **Joanna:** So you say people [...] (*break due to technician changing tape in camera.*)
117. **Chris:** The reason, like, they don't let, the arcades are eighteen years and over, is because, like, if, if a kid gets too much into the game, like, he's gonna stick with it, like he's gonna get adapted to it, like, he's really gonna stick to it. Like, you know, you're in front of this arcade and you're playing all day, you don't study, you don't do anything. all you're doing is you're over there, right? And you're just spending all your money.
118. **Mark:** And an adult doesn't do that? Like an adult has a job ...
119. **Chris:** Well, he doesn't do it as much. Only eighteen years are those guys. I think you should be something like twenty-five.
120. **Mark:** How can you say that? Because I've seen plenty of adults in arcades and they might have jobs ...
121. **Chris:** Yeah, but they don't stick with it all the time.
122. **Scott:** You get smarter ...
123. **Mark:** And you're saying kids do?
124. **Joanna:** Okay.
125. **Chris:** And, um, about movies, like, you know, let's say a kid around five year, five years old goes to see "Halloween II"? Man! The kid'll be scared out of ... Oh my god! He'd be so scared, he wouldn't be able to sleep! Man! He'd just die he ...
126. **Mark:** [...]
127. **Chris:** You, You ... That's right.
128. **Voice:** He wouldn't understand it.
129. **Chris:** Really. He'd just die, like that, man.
130. **Joanna:** Okay. So you're saying that you have to be mature enough and the court is best to decide for the people.
131. **Chris:** That's it.
132. **Joanna:** Okay. Now, last but not least, let's see if we can try and figure out do we have written rights or are they just in the head and who gives the right? Randee. .
133. **Randee:** Okay, I'd like to disagree with Mark with the movies. It's not only that but I think he's ... they can go see let's say, a little kid

can go see a movie like "Halloween" and they'll be scared and the parents will tell them not, advise them not to go because they're more experienced and they've, they go, they went through more, and they already went through that, and they know what's happening. And also, and, when the child is getting older, and they're able to go to their friend's house and stay there late and they only have too much, um, they guard over you too much just because they love you. "Well, I don't want you to go too late because you, you can't walk home," and all this and they're over-protected and they try to keep you at home and they lock you up, kind of. But they have the right because they're the parents and they're more experienced and they learned their lessons in knowing what's good for you and everything.

134. Joanna: So you're saying, like Belinda, you have to have maturity and you have to have, uh, experience to know what's right and that when you're a child you can't really, you don't really know yet but in time, you will be the one who is deciding in your case. And that they only have too much, um, they guard over you too much just because they love you.

135. Randee: Well, yeah, something like that.

136. Joanna: Okay. And now I think it's time for the free, the free talk. Free discussion.

* * * * *

After the 'free discussion,' the children were asked for any tentative conclusions they might draw from the discussion and first Joanna, as leader, was asked to give her perception of the discussion as leader.

137. Joanna: [. . .] were saying that younger kids have less rights than older kids and then other kids were saying um, you have to be mature enough to handle your rights or, you have to have enough experience.

138. Teacher: So one of the important factors is that maturity has a role to play. Okay. Um. But age . . . are age and maturity the same thing? We didn't get into that really, did we?

139. Joanna: No. It was, yeah, kind of, we were on the edge but never really . . .

140. Teacher: What about the question about rights, where rights come from? Several possibilities here. What were some?

141. Joanna: Okay, well, when we were discussing this after, just a couple of people were here, we

were saying about how UNICEF has rights for kids that are written down.

142. Teacher: The Charter of Children's Rights?

143. Joanna: Yeah.

144. Teacher: Yeah?

145. Joanna: They have those rights but then other people were saying well it's not only rights that are written down, I mean, you have rights that just, I mean, they are human rights that everyone under-, like, knows and understands. That come from . . . your . . . brain.

146. Teacher: So some, some rights can be written down, can and are, uh that others, as Marnie said, they're just there. But how do we, how do we know they're there? If we could get into it some more. And some rights are just there but we have to . . . we still want to ask how they got there. What makes them there and other rights not there? . . . Ian, do you want to add something?

147. Ian: Yeah. I think your parents give you rights.

148. Teacher: We're now getting into the discussion again and I promise that we'll come back to it if there's still lots more to say.

149. Ian: But you're just making a conclusion.

150. Teacher: Okay. And, and is this a conclusion from from the discussion? Sorry.

151. Ian: I think that the people who um take care of you, they, they give you rights. Like, Scott said that they make you go and they they make you take out the garbage and all that.

152. Voice: That's not a right. We didn't have a discussion about that.

153. Teacher: Oh, so some, some rights are given to you by . . . elders.

154. Ian: Yeah.

155. Teacher: Okay.

156. Ian: Or who, the people who take care of you.

157. Teacher: And they can also be taken away (*Writes on blackboard*) . . . by guardians.

158. Lisa: Can I have something, I have something to say about what Ian said.

159. Teacher: We're just, we're just focussing on some tentative conclusions, here. Joanna, are there any more?

160. Joanna: Okay. People said about the arcades and movies that you shouldn't, you shouldn't be allowed to go because you weren't old enough to handle it. That kind of goes under maturity uh but then Mark was saying how um how he was saying that uh you should that older people have more rights than kids but not necessarily they have more maturity

Notes:

161. Teacher: Okay. So, we want, we really were, were skirting around the issue of maturity and age and how they are related. We could get, we could do a good discussion just on that, on that alone. Each of your individual cases that you brought up, some of them were very good, each one of them could be the subject for a whole discussion also. Any more?

162. Joanna: I can't think of any more.

Bell rings.

163. Teacher: Alright, well. I just wanted you to get, to pull out of the discussion, where, where we got with it, that we didn't, we didn't have it at the beginning and this is what we got out of the discussion.

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1. Copies of the video-tape may be obtained by contacting any of the following:
 - 1) Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children
Montclair State College,
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Telephone: 201-893-4277
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2. For a detailed discussion of the discussion procedures as developed by the children in the "P4C" sessions, see Kyle, Judy A. "*Managing Philosophical Discussions*" *Analytic Teaching*. Vol. 3, No. 2, 1983, pp. 13 - 16. This article was reprinted in *Thinking*. Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 19 - 22. A revised and enlarged version of this article is available from the author.
3. Lisa acts as Name Recorder and lists the names in the order in which Joanna will call on speakers. See Introduction
4. Joanna follows the Dialogue Procedure as explained in the Introduction.
5. Marnie is referring to an example from a previous exercise on a worksheet or ditto.
6. "*Raiders of the Lost Ark.*"
7. Dawn is using the name of a fictional character as explained in the Introduction.

Judy A. Kyle