

## The Little Prince and the Philosophy for Children Program

Reading *The Little Prince* just after coming to know the Philosophy for Children program is a new and rich experience. It is possible to see, transparently, through *The Little Prince* different episodes in the 'P for C' programs and vice-versa.

For example, when the prince angrily tells that millions of years ago flowers already had thorns and asks, "And isn't it serious to try to comprehend why they spend so much time producing useless thorns?" This question is in *Pixie's Manual*, on page 83 "Since we're only going to lose our first set of teeth, why should we bother to have them?"<sup>2</sup>

Another example would be the reasoning of the drunkard to explain to the prince why he drinks and the reasoning of Harry's father concerning smoking and how he started smoking in chapter 15 of *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery*.

In a third passage, there is a relation to *Pixie* with regard to analogies and to part-whole relationships; it is the geographer's example, when he tells the prince that it is required from the explorer to provide proof of what he says. "In case, for instance, of a big mountain, he'll bring big stones."<sup>3</sup>

### CARE AND ATTENTION

With regard to *The Little Prince* and the episode on *Lisa*, ch. 3, "Kio falls down the stairs," the little prince is told by the fox that it is through taming that a person becomes someone necessary to us and we become necessary to this other person. To tame is to make clear (and/or create, generate) the necessity of each other between two persons (or would it be also animals and/or flowers?) that have established some relationship. The fox also explains that in order to tame, there is a need of patience, rites and time. "It was the time you spent with your rose that made your rose so important,"<sup>4</sup> says the fox.

There is a linkage between having the necessity of someone and how important this person is to us. We are for and take care of and give attention to what or whom is important to us, be it a rose, the stars, giving orders (as the king the prince visits), drinking, admiring ourselves, lighting a lantern, people we like.

Kio is important to Suki in the same way that he is important to her. They have captivated each other and a real necessity of each other exists between them. However, it seems in the scenes of this episode that Kio was more aware of his necessity for Suki's attention than Suki was aware of, both, Kio's needs and aware of her own need to give him affection and to develop herself to be attentive to him.

Lisa, in the last conversation she has with Suki in this episode, helps to prevent Suki from doing what the little prince tells he would have to do if his rose discovered he knew it was not the only flower of that kind in the whole world. He thinks, "... it would start to cough, it would pretend it was dying, ... And then I would have to pretend I was taking care of it, because otherwise just to humiliate me, it could, well, really die."<sup>5</sup> If Suki were to give Kio a lot of attention in the following days of the "accident", she would have been just pretending she cared about him, to

prevent him from (to parody the prince) 'starting to cough and to pretend he was dying.'

It is hard to care about someone and convince this person of this reality without being able to spend some time to show this care. It can be done by sending a card, talking on the phone, playing a game with, spending a month together, giving a flower or many other ways. Not showing it in any way does not facilitate the feeling of importance that is basic to friendship, interpersonal relationships and love. In *The Little Prince*, the fox points out "... people do not have time to know anything ... men don't have friends anymore."<sup>6</sup>

The final 'take care' Suki wonders about seems to me a way for Lisa to say that Suki should remember herself and therefore be in her best shape (in all ways) since Suki is important to Lisa and Lisa does care whether Suki is O.K. or not. It is a way Lisa uses to tell Suki that she is cared for by someone and this way she should not forget herself by giving all of her attention to Kio, the homework and the housework. She should care a little about herself, too.

There is a lot to be remembered and re-learned every time we read *The Little Prince* again. It is amazing how quick people get involved with the adult's world the little prince is puzzled about, and how people forget to enjoy any other possibilities life presents us.

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### Footnotes

1. Saint-Exupery, A., *O Pequeno Principe*, cap. VII, p. 29.
2. Lipman, M. and Sharp, A.M., *Looking for Meaning*, p. 83.
3. Saint-Exupery, A., *O Pequeno Principe*, cap. XV, p. 56.
4. *Ibid*, cap. XXI, p. 74.
5. *Ibid*, cap. XX, p. 67.
6. *Ibid*, cap. XXI, p. 70.

### Bibliography

- Saint-Exupery, Antoine de. *O Pequeno Principe*. traducao de Dom Marcos Barbosa, 3 edicao, Livraria Agir Editora, Rio de Janeiro, 1956.
- Lipman, M. and Sharp, A. M. *Looking For Meaning*. Instructional Manual to accompany *Pixie*. New Jersey: First Mountain Foundation 1981.
- Lipman, M. *Lisa*. second edition. New Jersey: First Mountain Foundation 1983, episode six on chapter three, "Kio Falls Down the Stairs", p. 23 - 25.