

# THE COMPLEXITY OF RESPECTING TOGETHER:

## From the point of view of one participant of the 2012 Vancouver NAACI conference

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*Dedication: I would like to dedicate this essay to Mort Morehouse, whose intelligence, warmth, and good humour sustains NAACI to this day. I would like, too, to dedicate this essay to Nadia Kennedy who, in her paper “Respecting the Complexity of CI,” suggests that respect for the rich non-reductive emergent memories and understandings that evolve out of participating in the sort of complex communicative interactions that we experienced at the 2012 NAACI conference requires “a turning around and looking back so that we might understand it better.” Thus, though “we cannot grasp the essence of the system in some determinate way, since each description provides a limited view, and portrays some aspect of the system from a specific position inside or outside it, and at a specific point in time,” nonetheless respect requires that we try “to take different ‘snapshots’ of such systems and attempt to make sense of them.” It is as a result of this urging that the following snapshot was attempted. My thanks to Nadia for being such an inspiration, and to all the participants for making this conference such a memorable occasion.*

Note: All references are to papers presented at the Vancouver 2012 June/July NAACI conference unless otherwise noted. Since none are published as of yet (August 2012), referencing will be informal (see reference list) with the approval of the authors. My apologies for any misrepresentation or under-representation. My apologies, too, for non-representation of the fruitful contributions of non-presenters.

Does respect require unconditional regard?

The notion of respect seems inherently confused. Children are taught that they ought to respect their parents, their teachers, indeed, all their classmates. Adults are lectured about the need for respecting all persons—a touchstone that some argue anchors human rights. But what precisely does this notion of respect mean?

Many believe that respect, as used in the above edicts, requires that one avoid acting or speaking in ways that the other, whether present or not, might find unpleasant or offensive (extreme cases being the exception). Interestingly, this subliminal understanding became evident at the 2012 Vancouver NAACI conference when a number of those present expressed discomfort at “the way the conversation was going” following a presentation on the issue of “Respect and the Veil” (Susan Gardner). The central argument of Gardner’s paper was that since face covering (as in the burka or the niqab) appears to those outside the practice as being potentially oppressive, and since those who wear the face covering know this (an analogy of crying fire in a theater), and since the face covering tends to preclude the possibility of genuine communicative interaction so that the presence or absence of oppression cannot be estimated (leaving those who are concerned about the oppression of women in an impossible bind), and since loyalty to the Muslim tradition can be visibly upheld by wearing the hijab (head scarf), the paper concluded that “the practice of face covering and respect for that practice are . . . incompatible.”

Some who joined the Communal Inquiry following the paper suggested that the argument, in and of itself, was insulting to those women who “voluntarily” wear the face covering—an insult that was doubly egregious as it smacked of imperialist arrogance, i.e., that those outside the practice have no business judging those inside the practice. Some expressed discomfort in subjecting this sensitive issue to overt critical inquiry at all—thus, at least subliminally, supporting the intuition that speaking in a way that the other, whether present or not, might find unpleasant or offensive was somehow disrespectful.

This reluctance to get into the judging game (does respect not require that we avoid it?) was one of the central issues that was the focus on the 2012 NAACI conference, so it is ironic that the distaste for judging emerged surreptitiously in a conference whose focus was to analyze this very issue. Such reticence, interestingly, also underscored the point made by Dale Cannon in his paper “P4C, Community of Inquiry, and Methodological Faith” in which he noted the important role that faith plays in process of critical inquiry, i.e., that participants in Communal Inquiry must have faith that something of value will come from the process of doubt (hence the claim that the role of doubt is subordinate to and serves faith in reasoned inquiry). As Cannon notes: “To give oneself over to reasoned inquiry clearly involves a sort of venture that is fraught with uncertainty and risk.”

In this particular instance, faith in the method seemed weak. However, happily, it blossomed through most of the ensuing tangles over many equally contentious issues, a central one of which was the general topic of the degree to which respect required unconditional regard.

Respect does not require unconditional regard?

The first paper of the conference, by its very title, i.e., “To Tolerate Means to Insult,” took issue with the suggestion that a bland hands-off non-judgmental “tolerant” attitude is a form of respect. In it, Barbara Weber quoted Marcuse as warning that “tolerance gives the aloof and uncaring majority of people a ‘legitimate reason’ (in form of an accepted value) to stand back, even when they are direct witnesses of social injustice or violence; and the ruling class welcomes this ‘cultivated indifference’ in the form of tolerance, because they can proceed with their practices and sustain the system of power” (95f). Gardner, in an article published elsewhere (2009), makes a similar point, though with a tangential focus, when she warns the Philosophy for Children community against adopting “caring thinking” as one of its primary educational goals, as the very name tends to anesthetize both students and teachers against the frequent need not only to judge, but to stand up against injustice and individuals perpetrating harm. Lena Green referred to this point in her paper, entitled “Philosophical Inquiry as a Means of Teaching Respect in South African Classrooms,” in which she notes that “though teachers in South African schools are aware of the need to respect diversity, it is far from clear at what point diversity becomes unacceptable and is no longer a right.” Green refers to Gardner (2009) as arguing that “there are circumstances (e.g. bullying) in which approval and respect is not appropriate” (3,4).

The argument that respect does not require unconditional regard also threaded its way through Gardner’s paper “Gifting Freedom, Not Favour,” in which she argues not only that unconditional regard is not required, but that such an attitude can be ethically contemptible. This is so because selves and their corresponding sense of agency develop as a function of intersubjective practical reasoning, i.e., we become aware of (and hence gain control over) our actions as a result of the changing evaluative responses of others toward our own actions. A bland “‘I’m okay, you’re okay, and it’s okay’, within which nobody really cares what other people are doing or whether or not their cultural practices are acceptable” (Weber), would quite literally obliterate the intersubjective mirror which keeps an agent’s freedom alive.

Jason Howard, in his paper “Claims of Conscience and the Space of Reasons,” echoes a similar position with the argument that an individual’s sense of agency emerges in interpersonal judgemental interaction. Howard quotes Ricoeur as defining imputability as “the ascription of action to [an] agent, under the condition of ethical and moral predicates which characterize the action as good, just, conforming to duty, done out of duty, and finally, as being the wisest in the case of conflictual situations” (292). Howard defines this awakening of our capacity for accountability as “conscience,” and he argues that its specific function is best understood when seen in reference to the core moral emotions of guilt, shame and pride. “More specifically,” he says, “conscience mediates the inherent volatility, disruptiveness and alienating effects of these moral emotions, empowering agents to see themselves as the author and proponent of these emotions rather than their victim.” I take Howard to be arguing here that it is in response to the changing and potentially threatening judgments of others (hence shame and guilt), that conscience and its integrating power of reason emerges. Thus, Howard says that “we come to the

world of reasons as a way of appropriating the hold that values have on us,” and that “we come to care about rationality and the power of reasons not primarily because of a desire to be correct or consistent, as much as from the ability of reasons to disclose and amplify our capacities and concerns.” “One’s sense of self-worth,” in other words, “is always in negotiation with others, for better or worse.”

Mort Morehouse, in his paper “Thinking about ‘Gifting Freedom, Not Favour’ and Our Future,” also underscores the importance of intersubjective negotiation for self-maintenance by warning us about the potential deleterious impact of distorted communication on those who are immersed in social media in general, and who interact with robots in particular. Morehouse refers to Sherry Turkle’s research (2011) on robots (e.g., companions for senior citizens, pets for children), as well as the use of texting and other electronic ways of connecting with others. With regard to robots, Turkle’s research indicates that we seek uncomplicated affection from robots as well as uncomplicated affection toward these objects. Morehouse notes that what is of concern to Turkle is that, in these situations, the robots can become more real and often more consistent than “real” people, hence alerting us to the fact that such “unconditional regard” (of and to robots) can become so addicting that it can blind us to the freedom-diminishing impact of a responsibility vacuum. And Morehouse also notes Turkle’s concern about the safety and superficiality of connecting through social media, which tends to bring with it a diminished propensity to take the deep risks of uncertain connections in “lived” interactions. Thus, Morehouse quotes Turkle as noting that many people “nurture friendships on social-networking sites and then wonder if they are among friends. They are connected all day but are not sure they have communicated. They become confused about companionship” (17).

#### Respect requires value-communicative-interaction

The arguments presented by Weber, Gardner, Howard and Morehouse harmonize toward the message that due to our intersubjective dependency, respect requires that we attempt to engage in authentic dialogue with others—the authenticity of which would inevitably require honesty with regard to one’s evaluative stance. The approaches, however, slip slightly from each other with regard to the optimism for success of convergence. Thus Howard ends his paper with the comment that “Nothing can or should undermine the imperative of finding common moral ground with others, least of all our conscience.” And Weber ends her paper saying “in our movement towards the other, in this continuous approach and dialogue, we gain a momentary understanding (of ourselves, of the world, of other people). Due to freedom and alterity, our understanding of the other will always remain fractal: he will forever elude our ultimate grasp. But this call will lead to the continuous return to his/her Otherness.”

In contrast to these hopeful positions that dialogue with the other is always possible and always potentially positive, Gardner, since her investigation begins by focusing on the question of what kind of respect is owed a serial rapist/killer, is more obvious in recognizing that a meeting of minds may not be possible and, in many cases, should not be expected (e.g., the tragedy of the years of naïve American confidence that they would find common ground with the Nazis, despite years of shocking Jewish oppression long before the outbreak of the war, and even after the 1934 public declaration given by Goebbels, the Nazi propaganda minister, that Jews were “the syphilis of all European peoples” (Larson, 2011)). Gardner argues that respect in the sense of striving toward mutuality may, in certain circumstances, be inappropriate, but that nonetheless “recognition respect” demands that we view the other as a member of the moral community in the sense that the person is capable of controlling his/her actions and thus s/he is someone who is accountable. Thus, Gardner notes that “Though attitudes of disapprobation and indignation may short-circuit what Darwall calls ‘appraisal respect’ (122), they are not in the least disrespectful in the sense of suggesting that I view you as other than a member of the moral community. As Strawson points out ‘The partial withdrawal of goodwill . . . is, rather, the consequence of continuing to view (the other) as a member of the moral community; only as one who has offended against it’” (16).

#### Value-communicative-interaction: A tripartite distinction

The slippage between the above points of view, along with the initial intuition that there are areas that are truly none of our business (it is not our place to judge), suggest that, with regard to the claim that “respect carries the imperative of value-communicative-interaction,” there might ultimately be three positions: (1) the “intolerant,” (2) the “engaged,” and (3) the “tolerant.”

Based on his paper “Taking Interreligious Dialogue to the M.A.T. (Martial Arts Technique): Toward a Re-thinking of Respect and Dialogue with the Interreligious Other,” Eugene Muhammad would, I think, only be prepared to recognize #2. I will therefore briefly comment on the potential disagreement with respect to #1 and #3 below.

1. **THE INTOLERANT POSITION:** An imperative to demonstrate a “stand up and be counted” intolerance of those positions that appear to have no merit whatsoever and which will result in great harm (e.g., a serial rapist/killer, Goebbels, bullies, etc). In such cases, one can be described as intolerant in the sense that, though one may enter communication with the other, one does so knowing from the start that one will not be persuaded (an initial position that would disqualify the claim of genuine dialogue), but knowing that communication ought to be attempted nonetheless in the hope that some kind of mutual understanding will lay the groundwork for effective accountability. Muhammad, by contrast, seems to suggest that it is not only possible, but desirable, to engage in every dialogue with the understanding that one might be “converted.” He refers to terrorists to drive this point home. In contrast, one could argue that while there is huge merit to try, where possible, to bring oneself fully and authentically to the table, the result surely would simply be hypocrisy if one pretended to see the merits of a position that had no merit, e.g., someone who bayoneted children for fun.

2. **THE ENGAGED POSITION:** An imperative to engage in “personhood-maintaining practical-reasoning with others” (Gardner “Gifting”), i.e., being prepared to continuously reason with others to try and parse out what sort of rules ought to govern the behaviours and judgements of all reasonable people. Gardner reminds us that given that only genuine “second-personal reasoning” can contribute to the maintenance of our mutual freedom (as opposed to raw judgemental attitudes or the mental manipulation of ‘faux reasoning’ that can be destructive of our freedom), it is important that we make explicit the implicit assumptions that reasoners must make in order for this sort of reasoning to be efficacious. These assumptions are: (1) that we agree on a common non-subjective position-guiding reasoning process (i.e., you must be prepared to follow reason where they lead, including changing your mind); (2) that the goal is a common perspective anchored by reason (i.e., the goal is not just to persuade); (3) that our initial positions are different and that we are comfortable with that (i.e., something to be cherished); (4) that there is some common value-overlap (we know that a meeting of the minds is in principle possible); and (5) that we see one another as equal in this freedom-producing accountability relationship. It is of note that virtually none of these conditions are present in the “intolerant position.”

3. **THE TOLERANT POSITION:** An imperative to remain silent in the absence of invitation (despite what could be described as an imperative to think it out so as to understand one’s own position). In light of the fact that genuinely “engaged” dialogue is hard and time-consuming work, it is clear that it can and should only be activated with regard to behaviours and judgments that matter. And while there is no doubt that there can be much disagreement with regard to what behaviours and judgments really matter (see discussion above with regard to the veil), nonetheless, it is vital that we prioritize our commitments with regard to what we believe are fundamental for maintaining the good life for us all. In other words, there is lots of “stuff” about which we can, without shame or guilt, remain “aloof.” Since Muhammad is committed to the importance of pervasive deep authentic dialogue in general, and interreligious dialogue in particular, he would be concerned with the suggestion that I ought to simply “tolerant” your belief in the Big Pumpkin (or whatever). According to Muhammad, religious people ought to dialogue “to the death,” i.e., enter the dialogue being prepared to convert. However, it is of note that for Muhammad “a religious person is neither a fanatic nor someone who already has all the answers.” Since such a description does not fit any religious person I know, Muhammad’s view on the need to enter dialogue with those who “know they already to have all the answers” needs further discussion.

Respect for the power of relationship

The crucial mechanism that fuels self-conscious agency is the ability of the emerging (expanding) agent to see the changing evaluation of her actions in the responses of those in her social circle. There are two things of note with regard to this process. The first is the notion of the social circle. Clearly the influence that any value judgement might have will vary as a function of the quality of the bond between the agent and the other. Young Johnny, for instance, will clearly care less about the negative evaluation of a grumpy neighbour than he will about the disapproval of his beloved mother. Speaking in tune with the notion, Eva Marsal, in her paper, "The Concept of Respect - a Philosophical Challenge," argues that the affective degree of respect felt or not felt is dependent on the relative proximity to the object," and that the closer we "zoom in" on the referent, the more concrete the web of conditions becomes which induces us to say "We respect X."

This fact, that "the quality of the bond affects the quality of the influence," while clearly having important pervasive general implications, has critical ramifications with regard to education in particular. That is, if we presume that agents live in a social world of concentric circles characterized by succeeding weaker bonds, it follows that part of an educator's job is to ensure that she is perceived within the influential inner circles of her students if she hopes to be effective.

The second not-unrelated thing of note with regard to the process of perceiving the changing evaluation of one's actions from the viewpoints of others lies in the notion of change. That is, since it is change in the evaluative stance of the other that acts as a "somatic marker" (Gardner, "Gifting"), it is important to keep in mind that what is perceived as negative will be a function of the baseline quality of the relationship. Those who have had the privilege of swimming in a sea of highly positive regard can testify that even a hint of disappointment can have a life-changing impact. Thus, since pervasive (as opposed to "unconditional") positive regard helps to ensure a close-circle location thus increasing the potential for educative influence, and since pervasive positive regard also fuels the power to transmit a negative evaluation with minimal negativity (e.g., the raising of an eyebrow) which, in turn, helps preserve the inner location, it could be argued that pervasive positive regard, at least insofar as it is not unwarranted (i.e., when intolerance is not more appropriate), may be an important element in respecting others, at least in the sense of optimizing value-communicative interchange.

This claim that quality relationship underpins our interdependent self-consciousness calls to mind part of the message of Jessica Davis's paper entitled "Being Participation: The Ontology of the Socratic Method." Though her primary focus is on the use of the Socratic Method in educational settings, Davis's central message is that preserving/creating relationships is a basic good underived from other values. As Davis points out "engaging as such is what it means to be. . . . We are participation." Thus, since I exist and grow as a function of our communicative interchange, and since you do as well, and since our responsibility for responsabilizing one another is, in the process, discharged, the inherent value of relationship per se becomes manifest. Dialogue against the background of pervasive positive regard is valuable because, in a slight variation of Davis's words, it best facilitates the means by which each person develops their practical identity and engages in being. We are inherently interconnected and, as such, dialogue is a method conducive to self knowledge and wisdom; we can't know anything - even ourselves - without recognizing our interdependent ontology. Thus Davis quotes Paulo Freire (89) as saying that "Love is at the same time the foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself." As a testament to this very principle, Claudia Ruitenberg and Parvaneh Ghazinezhad argue in their paper "Is Respecting Children's Rationality in Their Best Interest in an Authoritarian Society?" that the mere hope that youngsters might one day learn to own their own thinking is sufficient reward for attempting to engage them in transformative Communal Inquiry despite the dangers (both to students and teachers) of so doing in a highly authoritarian country. As a testament to the love of which Freire speaks, Parvaneh quite literally takes up this challenge.

Creating possibilities through respect

In his paper "Respect and Dignity in The Discourse Between The Private And The Public Space," Jan Kleine argues that with regard to respect, we ought to do away with "artificial" forms, i.e., the kind of "public" respect as in respect for an office, e.g., the presidency, or the general "respect for persons," and focus, instead on the

respect deserved (concrete or private respect). Thus, according to Kleine, a misbehaving president ought not to be respected.

On the surface, this view seems to run counter to Gardner who argues in favor of the need for “recognition” (or abstract) respect in the sense of “being prepared to participate in the game of interpersonal practical reasoning.” Gardner notes however that this abstract respect actually requires that one be prepared to engage in “appraisal” or concrete judgments of others. Gardner thus notes that “It is imperative to keep in mind . . . that participant reactive reasoning is inherently judgmental. I can send the message that I believe that you are free not to do what you are doing only through the message that you ought not to be doing what you are doing (or sending its mirror image of praise).”

Thus, where Kleine sees a collision between recognition (abstract) and appraisal (concrete) respect, Gardner does not. This may be because, from Kleine’s point of view, public respect toward various offices or roles demands a kind of corresponding “submission,” and that this allows occupants to misbehave in ways that would otherwise be found utterly unacceptable, i.e., abstract respect might warp concrete respect. And there is surely merit to this view, i.e., that roles per se garner respect. Thus, we expect, do we not, a kind of reverential attitude not only toward the obvious revered roles of heads of state or dignitaries, but also toward virtually anyone occupying publically recognized roles, e.g., doctors, lawyers, teachers, parents, etc. Indeed, it is hard to see how a society could function without such role-respect. Interestingly, Eva Marsal’s account of how students at the University for Children in Bretten, Germany, reflect on the concept “respect” supports these very points. Marsal quotes 8-year old Laura as saying that she would have a whole lot of respect for the mayor who would soon be visiting her school, and 11-year-old Louisa as saying that “respect is important because ...if nobody respected anyone else there would be total chaos.”

Differences aside, however, Kleine’s initial question as to why we should respect a misbehaving president lays bare a function of respect that often goes unnoticed, namely the importance of creating possibilities through respect. What I mean by this is that, in respecting roles per se (what most certainly would be classified as “abstract respect”), we create the possibility of an individual inhabiting that role. Thus, in respecting the role of the teacher by, e.g., inhabiting the role of the student, I create the possibility of an individual becoming a teacher. If I did not, if instead I argued with every suggestion that the teacher made, or, in the words of 11-year-old Marvin, if students just kept getting up and running around the classroom (Marsal), the teacher would be unable to teach. And similarly, if I did not respect the role of self-conscious personhood by holding the other accountable, I would not create the possibility of other becoming self-conscious and hence accountable.

What is particularly intriguing in the above cases is that, in neither of these instances, am I respecting an actual individual. I am, rather, respecting the possibility of what an individual might become. This is, in a sense, a forward looking, but presently vacant, respect. However, precisely because of its lack of concreteness, this sort of respect can be fragile since it is maintained solely as a result of mutual agreement. If we break ranks and start accusing the Emperor of wearing no clothes, the emperor will indeed be seen as naked. If we refuse to insist that our students respect the role of the teacher, we will have no teachers. Thus, Kleine seems right in maintaining that roles per se seem to call for submission, even if the individual occupying the role falls short of expectations. However, in contrast to Kleine, it could be argued that, at least for the roles that contribute positively to societal functioning, that is a small price to pay for role-maintenance; and that rather than losing respect for the role when an occupant falls drastically short of role-expectations, the appropriate response would be that that individual be dismissed from the role, precisely in order to maintain respect for the “possibility-creating” power of roles.

On the other hand, Kleine’s challenge rings out an important warning, namely that we ought to be blind neither to “naked Emperors,” nor to royalty in servants’ garb. Reflecting back on the “veil issue,” I have in mind here gender roles that persistently and stubbornly ensure that those occupying the male role are often saturated in unearned respect, while those who occupy the female role (particularly the mother role) often suffer from a

pervasive lack of “abstract respect” along with the limited possibilities that such lack of respect entails. What is interesting about the later situation is that it suggests that abstract respect for roles may, in part, be a necessary condition at least for some sorts of concrete individual (appraisal) respect (e.g., since mothering per se is not respected, excellence in motherhood isn’t either). What is interesting, too, about the latter situation is that, had the discussion with regard to “Respect and the Veil” been couched in terms of abstract respect (i.e., that the veil is worrying because of its impact on the “role of women” rather than women per se), it might have been seemed less potentially insulting to those actual women who wear the veil.

All in all, then, it turns out that the distinction (and potential connection) between recognition and appraisal respect, or between abstract respect for roles that create (or limit) possibilities, and evaluative judgments of actual concrete others, is clearly one that needs to be kept at the forefront of our understanding, if we are to gain a deeper appreciation of the multi-dimensional role (Marsal) that respect plays in our lives.

Silence as a sign of “respect deficit.”

Picking up on the theme of gender roles in the conference itself, it came as a shock to participants when it was noted near the end of the conference by our University of Washington colleagues (Jana Mohr Lone, Sara Goering, and David Shapiro), who gave an intriguing presentation entitled “The Connection between Respect, Inquiry and Philosophy for Children,” that though the gender representation at the conference was equal (18 males to 18 females, including non-presenters), approximately 80% of voices in response to the various papers were male. When this was brought to our attention, it is of particular interest that 80% of the enthusiastic responses were again male—some saying they didn’t believe it, some saying they found it unsurprising given the pervasive, often invisible, forces of the patriarchal society in which we live, some talked about feeling self-critical because they knew they frequently occupied an inordinate amount of talk-time but seemed unable to stop, and some said that even if it were true, it wasn’t necessarily a bad thing since, after all, many females had not been aware of this inequity, thus echoing the second response that many of us have become habituated to the patriarchal status quo. The latter point, that the women in the room were unaware of and/or not upset by the male monopoly of talk-time, interestingly reflects a point made in Christine Ng’s paper, entitled “The ‘Problem’ of Quiet Students,” in which she says that silence isn’t necessarily a bad thing, i.e., that silence on the part of participants in Communal Inquiry may be a function of the fact that they are so wrapped up in, and presumably benefiting from, the argument that they fail to notice the source of the comments, or even their own relative silence.

Nonetheless, though silence may not necessarily indicate a lack of inclusion or benefit, the bottom line of Ng’s paper was that those who facilitate dialogue have a responsibility to create strategies that discourage monopoly and its co-variant, lack of overt participation, since, clearly, the greatest benefit of dialogical interchange accrues to those who are actively involved. Active engagement, after all, ensures that one can grow as a function of testing one’s viewpoints against those of others, and it ensures that one gets practice in, and hence becomes more efficient at, quickly formulating one’s own views coherently. And, as was previously noted, overt engagement is also the active ingredient out of which relational bonds are formed—all of which leads us to an interesting paradox. On the one hand, believing that one is well-placed in one’s social relationships (e.g., the “respect-saturated male role”) is a necessary condition for being comfortable in throwing oneself into genuine dialogue, and yet, on the other hand, genuine and engaged dialogue is a necessary condition for creating relationship. Thus, on the assumption that women (who occupy an under-respected gender role) tend to be more intimidated by bonded-dialoging, respect-saturated men than the other way around, and if the result is that men feel more comfortable than women in expressing their viewpoints, and, as a result, in fact do so, then this will create even stronger bonds between the men who are talking, who, in turn, will feel even more at ease to speak in the safe place in which they have already created bonds. It is thus a self-sustaining process, and it is to Christine’s credit that she brings what’s in the shadow of those who talk front and centre in her paper. In that regard, we ought to heed Ng’s argument that teachers and facilitators have a serious responsibility to be alert to the quiet voices who may be under-confident due to the “respect deficit” of the roles that they occupy, while at the same time being weary of the monopolizing voices of those who may be innocently blind to the “respect deficit” of others.

And so, interestingly, we are back at the beginning. The first day of the conference brought an uncomfortable confrontation with the issue of women wearing literal veils (and how that may distort genuine participatory dialogue). In this discussion of talk-inequity, we found ourselves uncomfortably confronted with the issue of women wearing invisible veils (and how that may distort genuine participatory dialogue). In this regard, Gardner (Veil) quotes Susan Sherwin as noting that the capacity to at least recognize and possibly (perhaps even easily) resist structures that may be oppressive (40) is a necessary condition of gender equity. Sherwin also notes that it is the society, not just the agent, that ought to be the subject of critical scrutiny under the rubric of what Sherwin refers to as “relational autonomy” (42). This “scrutiny of society”—in this case our own interactions during the NAACI conference—brought to light the lamentable fact that invisible oppressive forces can creep into the interactions of even well-meaning, self-reflective, highly intelligent, non-patriarchal individuals gathered within a Community of Inquiry, one of whose goals was to examine this very issue. And it demonstrates in spades that, if respect and the practice of veiling (visible or otherwise) are indeed incompatible, and if pervasive respect is the sort of ideal toward which we all aspire, then we all have our work cut out for us.

Children and animals call out for “individuating respect.”

Both David Kennedy and Wendy Turgeon made a strong plea for ramping up our respect for children. Though Kennedy argued for the need to “listen to children,” it has noted that such an edict, as it stood, carries the danger of being misrepresented as a requirement even for helicopter parents to further intensify their tendencies to indulge (pamper, cosset) youngsters, some of whom are already be on the path of becoming whining, self-centred, spoiled, narcissistic brats (!). (That such a threat is real and has serious gender implication is the topic of Elisabeth Badinter’s recent book *The Conflict: How Modern Motherhood Undermines the Status of Women*.) A further suggestion was that what was needed for the flourishing of children was not so much listening per se, but rather authentic communication—though this suggestion too remains opaque. The possibility of an answer to what sort of respect children might require floated through Wayne Henry’s paper entitled “Respect for Non-Human Animals.” Though Henry’s defence of a “strong animal rights position” was met with some scepticism, the challenge that Henry’s paper lays at our feet is daunting. Since children are, in many ways, more like non-human animals than human adults (we don’t, for example, recognize the central adult human right/responsibility of self-determination in either), we are seriously lacking in theoretical framework that sets out guidelines as to what is required with regard to the ethical treatment of either.

This need to realign our view of both children and animal/nature is a message found throughout Kennedy’s paper. Though the title of his paper is “Why Children Deserve To Be Listened To,” his general message (it seems to me) would not be drastically dislocated if one transformed its title to “Why Animality (wherever one finds it, e.g., child or nature) Deserves To Be Listened To.” I say this because of Kennedy’s insistence that we become sensitive to neoteny, i.e., the child within that remains through adulthood. Since the new born child is, after all, a “mere animal,” becoming sensitive to neoteny surely requires that we become sensitive to our enduring animal nature. In line with this view, Kennedy refers to Marcuse (Sensibility 1969) in arguing for a new sensibility “which is marked most significantly by the way we experience nature and the lived world”; for an emergent paradigm which finds its primary narrative in a “new relation to nature,” and that “liberation of nature is the recovery of the life-enhancing forces in nature.” (Marcuse, *Nature and Revolution*, 235). It is for that reason, Kennedy argues, that we must transform education so that it is “grounded in an experience of nature as a totality of life to be protected and cultivated”—a suggestion that would support Henry’s crusade to enhance respect for non-human animals.

Turgeon, too, speaks to this child/animal(nature) dyadic challenge. She notes that from the adult human standpoint, many believe that “nature (from rocks to plants to many animals) need not be honoured because as inert matter, as simply ‘natural,’ it has no moral standing. Since nature cannot function as a moral agent, the call to acknowledge its status as a moral patient is still suspect.” She goes to note that “Children and animals do offer us pause for thought: children as future-persons and animals as metaphorical humans with faces,” but that “too



often it is simply a pause and we return to our common ways of treating them.” And though the primary focus of Turgeon’s paper is the child, much insight can be gleaned (as was done with Kennedy’s paper) by substituting “animal” in many of Turgeon’s references to the child. So when Turgeon makes the case that there is a connection between respecting the child without (Korczak) and respecting the child within (Bachelard), one can likewise make the case that there is a connection between respecting the animal without and respecting the animal within. Similarly, when Turgeon makes the case that it is important to relearn how to see the world through the eyes of a child, one can easily make the case for the need to relearn to see the world through the eyes of the animal. Intriguingly, Turgeon actually refers to Temple Grandin, in this regard. Grandin, an autistic, believes that she is able to see the world in a less conceptualized abstract manner than the way “normal” adult humans see it, i.e., that she believes that she sees the world more like animals do. In support of this point, Grandin claims that, like animals, she actually sees trees, i.e., specific individuated trees, rather than mere instantiations of the concept of tree. If all of this is true, i.e., that our actual perception of the world becomes progressively less concrete as our ability for abstraction is enhanced, this child/animal dyadic challenge suggests that, aside from “respect for persons,” we ought to construct another basic category of respect, namely “respect for individuals.” That is, since we are progressively less able or less inclined to see individuals, and we ought to relearn how to do that.

This edict, that we ought to “respect individuals,” asks us to don the eyes of the artist—to attempt to see what is right before our eyes. What is particularly interesting about the imperative that we ought to “respect individuals” is that seeing individuals would seem to be a necessary condition of eliciting emotive responses for those actual individuals (rather than for categories, such as “persons”)—something for which Turgeon, Kennedy, and Henry all seem to be making a case. As well, this view is concurrent with the behaviourist claim that emotional responses at their most primitive (and perhaps at their most sophisticated) are elicited through perception: it is the stimulus that produces the response. Marsal, too, notes the importance of what we actually see when she reminds us that the notion of respect is derived from the Latin *respicere*, which means “to look back at” or “to look again,” i.e., that respect is a particular mode of apprehending the object: that the person who respects something pays attention to it and perceives it differently from someone who does not, and responds to it in light of that perception. Marsal goes on to say (referring to Dillon) that “The idea of paying heed or giving proper attention to the object which is central to respect often means trying to see the object clearly, as it really is in its own right, and not seeing it solely through the filter of one’s own desires and fears or likes and dislikes. Thus, respecting something contrasts with being oblivious or indifferent to it, ignoring or quickly dismissing it, neglecting or disregarding it, or carelessly or intentionally misidentifying it” (4).

In summary, then, if we step back and adopt a phylogenetic/epigenetic perspective, this view suggests that as we animals morph into persons, we may become so preoccupied with managing our self-worth in negotiation with others (Howard) that we lose our ability to see any entity who is not a potential partner in this epic struggle, except in energy-saving ways as instantiations of abstract concepts. We can hypothesize that relearning to see other actual concrete individuals (outside of any reference to the struggle for self-worth) would bring with it emotive responses different in kind from those entangled in personhood: emotions such as wonder, amazement, and un-reflected appreciation, as opposed to the emotions of conscience, such as shame, guilt and pride (Howard). It may be, too, that in “becoming present” to actual concrete others, we ourselves concretize our own individuality, i.e., we become more than simply the reflection in other people’s eyes. If such is the case, it behoves us to become more aware of the fact that we “animomorphs” rather than merely being “pedomorphs” (Kennedy), and in so doing, we may relearn to see the world through the eyes of the animal within. And in so doing, hopefully, we will thereby honour Henry’s plea to see and respect the animals without, and to honour Turgeon and Kennedy’s plea to see and respect the ever-morphing animals that we refer to as children. If we insert the “animal tag” into the final words of Turgeon’s paper, the argument looks as follows: We discover our being in the world through the animal/child gaze and unless we can keep that gaze below the surface as still vital, we lose our centre. This demands that we respect the animal/child-within, even as Korczak passionately argues for the animal/children without. Respecting my animal/child-self will open up my vision of the animals/children around me in ways that I can acknowledge and hold in dialogue with my adult self and respecting animal/children around us reminds us of our own animal/child-self. Both movements, within and without, require a relational openness to

the other as familiar and sharing in the “astonishment of being.” And that movement can open up a window to the larger challenge to respect Being in all its manifestations.

#### Respecting the Limits of Communities of Inquiry

Many who are loyal to the wonders of the learning experience imbedded in participating in Communities of Inquiry may leave conferences dedicated to that topic somewhat ill at ease due to its seeming absence (with notable exceptions, of course, such as the Communal Inquiry lovingly facilitated by Rosario Del Collado at the 2012 NAACI conference). This unease emerges because conferences on the topic of Communal Inquiry often tend to resemble the more traditional format of presentation, followed by questions. The 2012 NAACI conference was no different.

Reflection on this fact brings to light two related issues, both of which speak to the question brought up by “team Alberta” (Rob Wilson, John Simpson, Jason Taylor) who challenged us to articulate where we go from here. The two issues related to lack of Communal Inquiry in conferences dedicated to that topic are: (1) whether teaching others how to facilitate Communities of Inquiry ought to be done solely through the use of that method, and (2) whether teaching practical reasoning, or practical wisdom, ought to rely solely on the use of Communities of Inquiry.

Beth Dixon and Charles List in their paper “Breaking the Rules of Respect” seem inclined to accept suggestion 2. They argue, on the one hand, that conceptual analysis has limited use in guiding behavior in real world circumstances, and, on the other, they argue in favour of the educative merits of, for example, participants, having been given a stimulus (such as the tale of the dancing camel who thought she had become a splendid dancer), and thereafter communally exploring such questions as: Should we aim to only please ourselves? Should we always please ourselves? Who should we listen to when critical advice is offered? and so on. Dixon and List argue that, through such experiences, individuals gain the habit of taking into account the myriad of particular contexts in which they will be required to make nuanced judgements.

What is interesting about Dixon and List’s paper is that it ends with a plea for advice as to how best to teach various ethical concepts in varying circumstances (teaching respectful hunting was also an area that they explored). Given that their paper demonstrated the efficacy of Communal Inquiry, one wonders why the unease as to how to proceed.

The answer may lie in a subliminal recognition of the limits of the Community of Inquiry, at least insofar as it is served up “plain vanilla,” i.e., a short stimulus followed by facilitated discussion of the sort they describe. And it may be precisely the subliminal recognition of the limits of the Community of Inquiry that scaffolds the comfort that experts feel in abandoning the method in the very conference whose topic is the method.

In recognition of the fact that respect for Communal Inquiry need not be exclusive, Maughn Gregory, in his paper “The Teacher as Satyagrahi, or, the Necessary Inter-relationship among Socratic, Critical and Contemplative Pedagogies,” explores the strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches named in his title. If we follow Gregory’s line of reason, it would appear that, clearly, there are other ways of knowing/learning than through Communal Inquiry; why not apps, for example (Leask)?

And with regard to the lack of Communal Inquiry at the conference itself, a second look reveals that its use would, in fact, have been inappropriate. That is, had we attempted to treat presented papers as mere stimuli that had no worth other than the capacity to prod thought (as in the dancing camel), this would have been blatantly disrespectful to presenters who were offering up products of the Communities of Inquiry that they had carried out in their own heads, at the cost of considerable time and energy. And though, as Graham McDonough reminded us, in his paper “High School Philosophy Teachers’ Use of Texts: Dominated, Negotiated, or Oppositional?” there is considerable risk in straying from a genuine interchange, I would venture to say that the

abandonment of the traditional rules of Communal Inquiry at the conference in no way diminished the value of the learning experience, even for (contra Dewey) facilitating future Communities of Inquiry. That is, to the degree that we came away with an enriched and more complex view of respect, we will not only be more adept at handling that specific issue should it arise, but more importantly, we will be better equipped to understand what is required of us in maintaining respect in future situations of Communal Inquiry.

Parting ways with orthodox COI rules in this instance thus generates the suggestion that though it is hard to see how the targeted benefits of Communal Inquiry such as thinking for oneself, learning to listen to opposing views, and so on, can be gleaned in any other way, there are a myriad of other knowledge gains (gains that can indeed enhance the communal experience) that cannot be so gained, e.g., understanding why Communal Inquiry enhances one's freedom, how to logically determine the strength of reasons, and so. To find our way forward, then, in response to Team Alberta's challenge, will require ever further clarification of this issue.

#### Concluding comments

From the point of view of one snapshot of the 2012 Vancouver NAACI conference, it seems that we learned, through a complex combination of didactic presentation and Communal Inquiry, that, aside from situations in which either intolerance or tolerance is required, we ought to heed the imperative to engage in the sort of authentic hard-nosed value-communicative-interaction that supports our interdependent self-consciousness and freedom. We also learned that, with regard to its context, pervasive (though not "unconditional") positive regard maximizes both the efficacy and worth of such interchange. We learned, too, that (abstract) respect for future possibilities may be as important as, or is at least connected to, the (concrete) respect of actual others, and that, in this regard, that we ought to be alert to the oppressive potential of respect-deficit for those who occupy roles of comparatively low worth. And we learned that "respect for persons," i.e., respect for autonomous rational self-conscious entities, ought not to so preoccupy us that we fail to see the value of, and hence respectfully respond to, individuals who are non- or merely-emerging-persons, and so, ourselves, be diminished in our failure to be "present." And finally, we have learned the importance of Nadia Kennedy's call to respect to the complexity of Communicative Interaction by "turning around and looking back so that we might understand it better." This snapshot, that is the result of such "turning around," is ultimately a product of the gifts we brought severally to, and through communal engagement in, the challenging project of trying to understand the complex notion of respect. It is in that spirit that this snapshot is submitted with a deep and abiding respect to all who so graciously contributed: presenters and non-presenters alike.

List of Presenters (and papers) at the 2012 Vancouver NAACI conference  
(last names in alphabetical order).

Rosario Del Collado Community of Inquiry Demonstration.

Dale Cannon. P4C, Community of Inquiry, and Methodological Faith

Jessica Davis. Being Participation: The Ontology of the Socratic Method

Beth Dixon/Charles List. Breaking the Rules of Respect: Character Education in School and Nature

Jason Howard. Claims of Conscience and the Space of Reasons

Susan Gardner. Respect and the Veil

Susan Gardner. Gifting Freedom, Not Favour.

Lena Green. Philosophical Inquiry as a Means of Teaching Respect In South African Classrooms

Maughn Gregory. The Teacher as Satyagrahi, or, the Necessary Inter-relationship among Socratic, Critical and Contemplative Pedagogies

Wayne Henry. Respect and Non-Human Animals.

David Kennedy. Philosophies of Childhood and Children's Philosophies.

Nadia Kennedy. Respecting the Complexity of CI

Jan Kleine. Respect and Dignity in the Discourse between Private and Public Space

Amy Leask. Tap, Swipe, and Think: Exploring the Use Interactive Technology in Introducing Philosophy

to Children

Jana Mohr Lone; Sara Goering, David Shapiro. The Connection between Respect, Inquiry And Philosophy For Children.

Eva Marsal. Respect and the Philosophy of Education

Mort Morehouse. Thinking about “Gifting Freedom, Not Favour” and our future

Eugene Muhammad. Taking Inter-religious Dialogue to the M.A.T.T. (Martial Arts as a Teaching Tool): Rethinking Respect for the Other within Inter-religious Dialogue.

Graham McDonough, Laura Pinto, Dwight Boyd. High School Philosophy Teachers’ Use of Texts: Dominated, Negotiated, or Oppositional?

Chris Ng. The “Problem” of Quiet Students

Claudia Ruitenberg and Parvaneh Ghazinezhad. Is Respecting Children’s Rationality in Their Best Interest in an Authoritarian Society?

Wendy Turgeon. Bachelard and Korczak on Childhood: Constituting Respect for the Child

Barbara Weber. ‘To Tolerate Means to Insult’ (J. W. V. Goethe): Towards a Social Practice of Respect and Recognition

Rob Wilson, John Simpson, Jason Taylor. Building Undergraduate Communities of Inquiry in Philosophy, Education, and Schools

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Sherry Turkle. *Alone Together: Why We Expect More From Technology And Less From Each*. New York: Basic books, 2011. Print.

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