Composing Dialogues to Express Self-Differentiation and Burke’s Rhetoric: A Way to Comprehend Multilevel Inner Growth

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This essay responds to the fact that many gifted learners choose to compose dialogues to express and enact the self-differentiation that accompanies multilevel inner growth. By discussing the level of consciousness at which dialogue composition begins and by recognizing the characteristics of gifted learners who compose dialogues, the essay also discusses why and how Burke’s rhetoric of empathic identification offers them an interpretation practice that meets their educational and emotional needs. The discussion unfolds several questions for further research.

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REFERENCES


resist peer pressure, which includes the capacity to integrate creative, divergent and convergent thinking with moral reasoning (Dabrowski & Piechowski, 1977, pp.46-47, 163-164).

By virtue of their third person perspective, enabling them to recognize what is higher and lower within the self and to discern discrepancies between inner and outer reality, these young gifted learners possessed the capacity to produce "effective novelty" (Cropley, 1999)—namely, creative dialogues that evoke "a shock of recognition in observers" (p.253). By choosing to compose dialogues, then, these gifted learners acted upon their self and social awareness—a characteristic of emotional giftedness according to Annamarie Roeper (1982). According to speech-act theory (Austin, 1975; Petrey, 1990; Ley, 1998), they enacted through language the choices that realize higher moral being. According to Kenneth Burke's (1945) theory of rhetoric, they used language to make recognizable "a second nature" carried within the language motive (p.33). They used language to create a shared house of consciousness for their unique dialogic acts. Moreover, they made a commitment to creative and moral growth, expressing that commitment through dialogue, the highest form of communication according to the speech-communication scholar Oscar L. Brownstein (1965).

We acknowledge gifted learners, their dialogic acts of awareness, and their learning and emotional needs when we offer them higher order thinking disciplines to meet their potentials for shaping dialogues of self-differentiation and their potentials for understanding and interpreting multi-level inner growth. One such higher order thinking discipline is Kenneth Burke's (1945) rhetoric of empathic identification derived from dramatic discourse and the moral aesthetics of play. Burke's rhetoric not only aims to bring out higher order metacognitive skills, skills that Resnick (1987) found connected with creativity; his rhetoric aims to develop the art of interpretation. Interpretation is the art of evoking the "shock of recognition" that Cropley (1999) found crucial to effective creativity. Accordingly, Burke's rhetoric aims to develop the composer's art of interpretation. His rhetoric would also develop the active listening crucial to effective understanding of the other.

This essay discusses the level of consciousness at which dialogue composition begins and why Burke's rhetoric offers gifted learners an interpretive practice that meets their educational and emotional needs. The essay then introduces the rhetoric of empathic identification and how this art of interpretation serves the one who not only wants to understand, but to unfold and shape his/her own multilevel inner growth. The rhetoric is then practiced to read the movement of multilevel inner growth through Alice in Wonderland, demonstrating how Lewis Carroll composed and interpreted self-differentiation. Finally, as a consequence of offering the rhetoric to gifted learners and reflecting upon their dialogue-making, a research question for further study emerges.

**Consciousness and Dialogue Composition**

The theater historian Joseph Roach (1996) found the roots of myth and dialogue-making to begin at the "autochthonous" level of consciousness "deeper than memory" (p.42). Lewis Carroll's (1866) Alice in Wonderland illustrates, characterizing the conscious pull of imagination toward an unrealized ideal and the fall through memory to a deeper place in the psyche where self-differentiation and dialogue-making begin. Disenchanted with her sister's book, because it lacks pictures and conversations, the dreamy Alice sees a white rabbit "with a waistcoat-pocket and a watch to take out of it," and with "burning curiosity" follows him—follows her imagination—down a rabbit hole that "seemed to be a very deep well." Her fall downward, past shelves of books and maps and jars of malamade, takes so long that she has time to wonder whether it will ever end, time to converse with herself, imagine that she will land in New Zealand or Australia, and time to imagine herself conversing with Dinah her cat. The fall ends just when "she felt that she was dozing off, and had just begun to dream." Past all other levels of awareness and deep in an underworld chamber upon a heap of stick and dry leaves, Alice "wakes up." She is conscious, keenly aware of the fact that her memory does not work as it normally would. She is conscious of her own self-differentiation and the dialogue-making that unfolds from it.

At the level of consciousness deeper than memory, then, Alice begins to express or enact self-differentiation through dialogue-making. The level of consciousness deeper than memory is a precultural level at which the historian Johan Huizinga (1950) found expresses the conscious movement of play and its motive—namely, moral constraint against harm. He found the conscious action of play to express "order, tension, movement, change, solemnity, rhythm, rapture" before corrupted by rules of game and goals of culture (p.17). He also found throughout history that poiesis—the making of poetry, drama, visual art, music and dance—emerged from play and play's motive of moral constraint (p.119). Accordingly, Carroll's Alice makes her own complete image of constraint against harm by making dialogues.

At the precultural level of consciousness deeper than memory where the motive of dialogue-making is moral constraint, Alice finds her highest personal ideal. Her ideal appears symbolically as "the loveliest garden you ever saw." At first, she is unable to enter this garden. She has yet to enact her highest personal ideal, though her way of enactment has already begun. Through making dialogues she will eventually realize her highest personal ideal and identity and be able to enter the garden, for this garden is within her.

The movement through Alice in Wonderland reveals Alice expressing her self-differentiation through dialogue-making. The question is: How does she comprehend, or make sense of these dialogues? The act, scene, agent, agency, attitude and purpose are the play-maker's terms for not only drawing a complete image of play through dialogue, but making sense of it. These terms of play-making comprise the reconnnective poetry or art that comprehends a complete image of moral constraint and interprets it. These are the very terms that Kenneth Burke borrowed to shape the speech-communication-interpretation model called a rhetoric of empathic identification.

Burke borrowed these terms from dramatic discourse, finding, like Plato (The Phaedrus), that dialogue is the most complete form of communication. The most complete form of communication, dialogue engages consubstantiality or the act of identification between speakers. As a matter of fact, Burke's rhetoric elaborates and advances Aristotle's (Metaphysics) misunderstood law of identity, namely, A is A, a law also developed from the practice of dialogue.
making. This law of identity states that the primary and best use of language is to create the act of identification or understanding between two speakers. Burke (1950) defined identification in its Aristotelian sense as the act that allows speakers B and C to be at one—to be A—with each other, while at the same time being uniquely B and C—persons who recognize their consubstantiality and their non-consubstantiality (pp.19-21). This definition seems to be in accord with the drama therapist David Read Johnson’s (1998) definition of mature identifications that reflect internalization (p.87), “identifications that correspond enough to the outside world and yet are infused with personal meaning for the individual” (p.90). Accordingly, the act of empathic identification requires tolerance for ambiguity, tolerance for being both A, or at one with another, and being non-A, or not at one with the other.

Burke (1968) discussed further Aristotel’s law of identity in Language as Symbolic Action. He found that “what is” always includes “what is not” (pp.9-13). Polarieties comprise identities and acts of identification recognize paradoxical relationships (Burke, 1945, pp.35-51). For example, Madeline L’Engle’s (1997) Meg of A Wrinkle in Time experiences the law of identity through space-time traveling. The narrative voice reflects Meg’s recognition that her own, precarious human condition is one of both being and nonbeing, living and dying.

She was alone in a fragment of nothingness. No light, no sound, no feeling. Where was her body? ...The corporeal Meg was not.... It was not as simple as darkness, or absence of light. Darkness has a tangible quality; it can be moved through and felt; in darkness you can bark your shins.... Suddenly she was aware of her heart beating rapidly within the cage of her ribs.... This movement, she felt, must be the turning of the earth, rotating on its axis, traveling its elliptic course about the sun. And this feeling of moving with the earth was somewhat like... feeling the gentle, inexorable tug of the moon (pp.53-54).

Levine (1999) observed that some children understood Meg and expressed their understanding through conversation with her and each other (p. 149). These children not only understood Meg, they comprehended the paradox expressed by the dialogic law of identification, tolerating the ambiguity necessary for a mature empathic identification with L’Engle’s imagined character.

To gifted children who express tolerance for ambiguity and who compose dialogues to express the paradoxes within human nature, Burke’s rhetoric of empathic identification offers a practice of interpreting dialogic acts with respect to six ways of making meaning. The act is the whole movement of consciousness to fulfill the motive for dialogue-making, which is moral constraint. Lewis Carroll’s (1866) act realizing moral constraint, named Alice in Wonderland, is the narrative act of retrieving the silenced, oppressed child of Victorian England, characterized as Alice, and giving her a safe place in which to compose the dialogues that enact her self-differentiation from the oppressive other, who is characterized as the Queen of Hearts.

Regarding further the Aristotelian grammar of motives, Burke (1945) wrote: “action has its reciprocal in passion, hence passion is the property of a patient” (p.452). He found, with respect to the poet John Keats, “the possibility of a bodily suffering redeemed by a poetic act” (p.453). Lewis Carroll’s redemptive passion is a high condition of wonder. His character Alice’s redemptive passion is to express enough dissatisfaction with herself to want to grow and enact her highest moral ideal. She expresses herself as an object—the one who is either too tall or too short and never just right in any circumstance or with any other. She expresses herself as a subject—the person who has changed several times since she woke up in the morning and whose multilevel inner condition gives rise to a “fondness for pretending to be two people,” one of them usually critical of the other. Alice’s redemptive passion also expresses the evil choice of retributive justice and prejudice—the Queen’s “off with their heads” sentence without a verdict—that she could choose to enact, but does not. When Alice then speaks out against the oppressive Queen whose motive is retributive justice, she not only heals herself, but the suffering body of others who identify with her. Accordingly, the rhetoric of empathic identification regards self-differentiation as a dialogic act between the self as suffering body and the self as agent of healing.

While the act may be the locus of motives and contain scenes of action, Burke (1945) found that the contrary is also true: the scene or material location may contain the act (pp. 3-20). For example, the suffering body of Keats contained the poet’s mind, his agent of healing, and the agent’s poetic act of redemption (Burke, 1945, p.452). The rhetoric of empathic identification, as such, views the dialogue-maker’s body as one scene of action. The act composed by the dialogue-maker’s agent of healing shapes and contains the internalized scene—the safe aesthetic play-space. This internalized scene is the particularized virtual future (Langer, 1953, p.306) of choices made. Carroll’s agent of healing, Alice, for example, contains or embodies the internalized aesthetic playspace of moral constraint, which she imagines to be the loveliest garden. Carroll calls this internalized virtual future “wonderland.”

Agency refers to how the internalized act becomes externalized. For Keats, the agency was making music with human speech. For children like Carroll’s Alice, dialogue-making is often the chosen problem-finding/problem-solving strategy or agency. The agency deconstructs the terms of division or suffering and reconnects the suffering body with the terms of unity or wholeness. With respect to multilevel inner growth, the agency deconstructs the terms, or moral ideals of the lower identity and connects the person suffering differentiation with his/her higher moral identity. Carroll characterizes Alice’s agency as her cat, Dinah, with whom she converses and for whom she exudes compassion. The agency is often the one with whom the agent of healing converses. Shakespeare’s Hamlet converses with two agencies: the poor ghost, who is the agent of retributive justice and a lower moral identity, and the wonderful Player, who weeps for Hecuba, the murdered Priam’s Queen, and whose compassion is the agency of a higher moral identity.

Purpose refers to the aim of the dialogue-maker’s act. The purpose of Carroll’s narrative act is to mend the suffering consciousness of the silent, oppressed child. To this end, his act releases the dialogue-maker, the agent of healing within the suffering body called Alice. Releasing the dialogue-maker involves allowing her to express the place of moral constraint against harm within her—the aesthetic playspace called Wonderland.

Attitude refers to consciousness. The artist’s consciousness shapes a poetic ideal into an act. The performed
act reshapes the artist’s consciousness to a new level of consciousness. Carroll’s attitude is a high condition of wonder, which he shares with his agent of healing, Alice. This attitude shapes multilevel inner growth until the act realizing Alice’s higher moral identity is complete.

With these six terms by which we understand the dialogic act of identification and its underlying motive, Burke acknowledged how empathic understanding is more complex than given aesthetic definitions imply. Empathic understanding is more than the mere “power of projecting one’s personality into the object of contemplation, and so fully understanding it” (Selzer, 1993, ix), more than an “involuntary identification with an external object such that an objective truth about ourselves is reflected rather than an objective truth about the object of identification” (Lee, 1952, pp.460-465). Empathic understanding is more than the German einfühlung or ‘feeling into the other’s condition of being’, more than “resonant emotions” between two or more human beings and a further “curiosity that decenters” the observer from his/her own reactions and presuppositions about the other (Halpern, 1993, pp.160-173). Empathic understanding is cognitive. A mental process of receiving, organizing, remembering, recalling and effectively applying information, empathic understanding can be developed into an art of interpretation. To this end Burke applied the rhetoric of empathic identification.

Burke used the rhetoric to read a composer’s way of interpreting his/her composition. His realization of the terms by which we understand a composer’s interpretive art are the very terms that also sustain the composer’s identification with the internalized aesthetic playpace, the safe place where the full action of moral constraint may be enacted and realized. Consequently the rhetoric may be offered to gifted learners to release the agent of healing or moral growth within them, to unfold the whole dialogue of self-differentiation, to sustain the dialogue-maker’s primary motive of moral constraint, and to engage the reconnctive movement of consciousness through which the dialogue-maker comprehends and interprets his/her dialogue of self-differentiation. When the dialogue-maker understands his/her own self-differentiation, then the rhetoric benefits the whole person’s multilevel inner growth. Furthermore, when the gifted learner interprets a whole dialogic act—his/her own, as well as the dialogic acts of others—then the rhetoric develops into specific interpretation skills his/her capacity to understand. Interpretation skills enable the composer to compose effective creative acts.

With its six terms of identification, Burke’s rhetoric is one of the most comprehensive speech-communication-interpretation models. More comprehensive than speech-act theory, the rhetoric reads not only speech objectives, but the motives for dialogic acts. The rhetoric also reads what becomes simultaneously unwoven and rewoven through a given text, surpassing both structuralist and post-structuralist critical methods. W. Ross Winterowd (1986) argued that “Burke’s dramatistic view of meaning would have preempted post-structuralists such as Derrida if they had been aware of his work through the years” (p.195).

Burke’s terms for composing and interpreting dialogic acts correspond to the way that young gifted learners already cognize the world within and the world outside of themselves, especially if they are composing dialogues. Nonetheless, these terms are new concepts to them, concepts which they need to realize are integral parts of an art of unfolding and re-cognizing dialogic meaning. They may best realize how the rhetoric is an art of interpreting experience by practicing it, both to read others’ poems, narratives, and dialogues and to compose their own creative acts.

Gifted learners may best practice Burke’s rhetoric when they understand that it is a speech-communication model for making and understanding meaning. Concerning presenting a new concept to them, Maria Montessori (1948) wrote, “The idea remains indefinite in the imagination of the child but it corresponds to reality. Given that each of the details is later studied, it causes him [her] to remember this view of the whole” (p.x). When introduced as a whole speech-communication model, Burke’s rhetoric presents the idea of all six ways of making meaning working together to make and comprehend a whole act of creative imagination. This idea remains in the memory of the learner.

The six ways of making and understanding meaning may be given psychological reality. The agent of self-differentiation and healing corresponds to the dramatic voice, I am. The dramatic I am here voice corresponds to the scene, which may be the suffering body with whom the agent identifies. “I choose to do or not to do” psychologically voices the act. “I compose dialogues between me and some other, or between me and myself, or between two opponents within me” voices agency. “I think or I feel” expresses the attitude or level of realization at play. “I follow my creative imagination and moral ideal” voices purpose.

Meaningful dialogue unfolds naturally from these six terms of interpretation. Each character or participant in the dialogue experiences and interprets experience with respect to all six terms. The dialogue composer reacts or responds to the unfolding dialogue with respect to all six voices.

After their introduction to Burke’s speech-communication model, gifted learners may want to read a poem or narrative and discuss how the author makes meaning with respect to the six terms of interpretation. A poem or a dialogue that expresses and interprets multilevel inner growth, such as Carroll’s Alice in Wonderland, could be a good choice to invite their conversation. An effective poem makes meaning with respect to all six terms, but may focus upon the scene-agent relationship or the agent-agency relationship, facts that gifted learners may realize through discussing how the poet makes meaning. Their questions that emerge from the discussion could be used to develop composing exercises that allow them to practice making meaning with respect to each of the six terms.

Reading The Movement Of Multilevel Inner Growth Through Alice in Wonderland

Practicing the rhetoric of identification to read the movement of multilevel inner growth through Alice in Wonderland demonstrates for gifted learners how Lewis Carroll composed and interpreted self-differentiation. Of course, such learners need to be asked good questions to help them understand how Carroll composed meaningful dialogue. The questions need to guide them to synthesize the new art of interpretation into their own composing process. The questions also need to affirm or help them to understand their own self-differentiation. Such questions evolve from the teacher’s understanding of both the creative work and participant learners. The following reading of Carroll’s Alice, then, is merely the foundation for deriving meaningful and catalytic questions.

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Alice's dialogues unfold a movement through five levels of awareness. Each level arises from a moral ideal or stage of moral reasoning. By stage is meant the period when the person's choices are made according to a particular moral ideal. These stages do not correspond to Piaget's stages of cognitive development. Rather, Alice's five levels of awareness and scale of moral ideals correspond to Dabrowski's (1977, pp.75-221) levels of moral reasoning. These feelings further indicate an emergent identity to be the agent of healing, "the second nature" emergent at the Institute of Child Psychiatry in Warsaw, found that the simultaneous feelings of inferiority and superiority accompany multilevel inner growth (pp.25, 27-32, 33-34, 43-48, 69-70, 122-125). These feelings accompany self-judgement or inferiority with respect to the personality ideal, self-consciousness or a high degree of awareness of an inner scale of moral and social values, and subject-object perception of the self or the beginning of inner dialogue. These feelings further indicate an emergent higher identity, a new center of control for learning and making moral choices. Burke's rhetoric finds this new and emergent identity to be the agent of healing, "the second nature" emergent from the language motive.

This agent whom Carroll called Alice characterizes through dialogue the lower levels of awareness and moral ideals that she could choose to enact, but does not, and juxtaposes these levels of awareness with the choices to grow that she indeed makes. She characterizes her lowest, most primitive level of awareness as creatures swimming in her pool of tears, all concerned with self-protection and survival. At this level, her speech praising Dinah, her cat, causes "a remarkable sensation."

Some of the birds hurried off at once: one old magpie began wrapping itself up very carefully, remarking, "I really must be getting home; the night-air doesn't suit my throat!" and a canary called out in a trembling voice to its children, "Come away, my dears! It's high time you were all in bed!" On various pre-texts they all moved off, and Alice was soon left alone.

Although Alice does not care to be left alone, and she regrets mentioning her beloved pet, she prefers to grow. She also implicitly prefers the company of those with whom she may enjoy a more consubstantial conversation.

Alice's choice to grow indicates positive disintegration, Dabrowski's (1964) term for "disintegration of the primitive structures" of psychical unity (p.3). As the person loses the cohesion which is necessary for feeling a sense of meaning and purpose in life, he is motivated to develop himself. The development instinct, then, following disintegration of the existing structure of personality, contributes to reconstruction at a higher level (p.3).

Accordingly, Alice becomes aware of her own multilevel inner condition after rejecting the lower moral ideal of self-protection, and she chooses to develop herself.

She expresses her own multilevelness in response to the Caterpillar's question, "Who are you?"

I—I hardly know, sir, just at present—at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have changed several times since then.

When her morphing condition is not understood by the Caterpillar, Alice interprets for him:

I can't understand it myself to begin with; and being so many different sizes in a day is very confusing... perhaps... when you have to turn into a chrysalis—you will someday, you know—and then after that into a butterfly, I should think you'll feel it a little queer, won't you?

Her comparison drawn between inner multilevelness and a chrysalis interprets her own condition. She is the suffering body. Her capacity to suffer multilevel inner growth is the suffering body with whom her emergent higher identity—the agent of healing within her—identifies and aims to make whole.

Realized at a second level of awareness, Alice's multilevel condition appears to be inner fragmentation—many selves, all submitting to the values of one group or another. The White Rabbit calls her "Mary Ann," and she responds by trying to be Mary Ann and to perform, but inadequately, Mary Ann's required task. With respect to this level of awareness, Alice chooses to reject the enacted value of relativism, the value that all values are equal—especially when she understands how this value is like the Duchess who cannot discern children from pigs. That is, she does not reject the moral ideal of relativism without first identifying with Mary Ann and her level of awareness. Only by identifying with and understanding Mary Ann can Alice truly reject the value that limits Mary Ann's growth without rejecting the person who accepts this value. Alice's way of learning, her capacity to identify with others, yet question, even reject their moral choices, reflects the emergent agent of healing who would realize the whole person and the higher moral value.

By choosing to reject the relativism that limits growth, Alice realizes a third level of awareness. She characterizes this level as the Mad Hatter's Tea Party. Here, she confronts a sense of her ideal—a sense of consubstantial conversation and compassion—but a failure to enact it. Self-criticism and criticism of the other interfere. At this third level of consciousness, Piechowski (1991) found a moral concern for what is higher versus lower in the self. Those who cannot choose to enact what is higher remain at the Mad Hatter's Tea Party, where the ennui of the Dormouse overwhelms them. Alice's choice to grow beyond her third level of awareness and to enact her highest ideal brings her face to face with "a door leading right into" a tree. She enters, and once more she faces the locked door leading into the garden.

This time, choosing according to her highest ideal, namely, self-realization in the service of the garden, she may eat the mushroom to become on the outside the size to which she has grown inside—the right size for entering the garden. Inside the garden, she faces a fourth level of awareness. She characterizes this level of "bright flower-beds and cool fountains" as peoples with gar-
gardeners like herself, three gardeners painting red the roses that grow white. Piechowski (1991) characterized this fourth level of awareness as a period of enacting the altruistic motto, “what ought to be shall be.”

At this level, Alice begins to enact compassion. She hides the gardeners whom the oppressive Queen would behead for their moral ideals. By enacting her highest value of compassion, she faces a fifth level of awareness. This level asks her to enact compassion, not only for the gardeners like herself, but for all.

Alice characterizes this level of awareness as a trial between her and the oppressive Queen, whose lower moral values and prejudice underlie her acts of beheading or silencing all who oppose her rule—her rigor without discipline. When Alice speaks up to oppose the Queen’s sentence before the verdict, the Queen turns purple and shouts: “Hold your tongue!” “I won’t,” said Alice. “Off with her head!” the Queen shouted at the top of her voice. Nobody moved.

“Who cares for you?” said Alice, (she had grown to her full size by this time), “You’re nothing but a pack of cards!”

Dramatized is the victory of the healing agent, the emergent higher moral identity within Alice, who identifies with the suffering body at all levels of awareness. This agent of healing within her gives Alice, the once silenced child, victory over the oppressive adult persona whose mask or personality is as thin or shallow as a playing card.

Alice’s rite-of-passage through dialogue-making is now complete. She has drawn a complete image of play with its underlying motive of constraint against harm and interpreted it. She has given birth to the new, higher moral identity within her, the one who identifies with and heals the suffering body. Accordingly, her dialogue-making may serve other gifted learners who identify with her. Their capacity to identify with Alice would include the capacity to join her “nonalgorithmic” journey or “path of action [that is] not fully specified in advance” (Resnick, 1987, p.3) and the capacity to remain in a high condition of wonder in order to tolerate uncertainty and ambiguity and ask the questions that need asking. Both of these capacities are, according to Lauren Resnick (1987), higher order thinking skills. While their being skills is questionable, these two capacities are gifts that may be developed into higher order interpretation skills. Such skill development can occur when students practice Burke’s rhetoric to read Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland.

Furthermore, Carroll, through the character of Alice, identifies with young people experiencing multilevel inner growth, who need such identification and who may benefit from the self-understanding that emerges when good peer-group discussions of the story transpire. Dabrowski (1964) encountered multilevel inner growth among seven-year-olds. Accordingly, second-through fifth-grade learners may find extremely meaningful a discussion of Alice’s dialogue-making to enact self-differentiating choices.

The quality of their discussion and learning may be enriched by the questions that teachers or teacher-counselor teams contribute. Questions need to invite readers to share both their understanding of Alice’s story and how the story is meaningful to them. Consequently, questions need to weave between asking readers to interpret Carroll’s text and asking them to relate how their experience may or may not be consonant with Alice’s.

The following questions were derived from Burke’s six levels of interpretation: About whom or what are you most curious? Who or what is your White Rabbit with a waistcoat pocket and a watch to take out of it? Describe or characterize. How do you respond? What do you do? What does Alice do? How could you describe yourself when you begin to imagine a most unusual event? Have you ever followed your imagination for a long, long time? Where did it take you? What did the place look like? Did you ever drift down to a deeper place within yourself? How does this place appear? How do you imagine this place to appear? How would you describe the best of all possible worlds? How could you bring this world into being? What could be some of the obstacles? Choose one obstacle and tell us how it makes you feel? To what could you compare your feelings? How does Alice draw comparisons to show us how she feels when she meets with an obstacle? How does Alice react to her obstacle? How do you react to your greatest obstacle? What do you do? What choices do you make that you wish you hadn’t made? You may write them down instead of sharing them aloud. Name the choices that Alice regrets. What choices are right for her? How does she know that these choices are right? What choices do you make that you are glad you made? How do you know when a choice is right? How does Alice compose a wrong choice and its effect? What happens to her when she makes a good choice? How does she learn? With whom do you dialogue? Yourself? A dog? A cat? What do you and your dialogue partner share in common? How are you different from one another? How are you like Alice? How are you different? The task is to find questions that guide readers to understand themselves and Alice and imagine how they could write their own meaningful dialogues.

A next-to-last question could be, Why do you think Carroll wrote this story? What was his purpose? How does he communicate his purpose? Why do you compose dialogues, and how do you communicate the reason for your choice? How do you usually communicate your reason for doing something?

By asking interpretation questions derived from Burke’s rhetoric, teachers may also learn from readers’ responses what kinds of thinking and composing assignments will carry them forward with respect to both improving their interpretation skills and accomplishing self-differentiation. Some levels of Alice’s awareness may be more appealing than others to a given group of readers, consequently demanding more discussion / realization time. Composing assignments, then, can be what the dialogue-makers want them to be, yet include challenges that are meaningful to them. Given adequate front-end time to complete composition, gifted learners tend to offer effective creative works.

A Research Question

Since practice of Burke’s rhetoric may engage the learner’s understanding of multilevel growth and capacity to interpret dialogues, eventually developing skills to shape dialogues with a reconnected movement of consciousness, the questions arise: Are effects of this rhetoric upon cognition measurable? How can this rhetoric be offered more effectively to gifted learners? Could the Spivack, Platt, and Shure (1976) Interpersonal Cognitive Problem Solving instrument that measures both creative solutions thinking and consequential thinking measure the growth of learners?
who practice Burke’s rhetoric? Or, are the dialogues made and interpreted by their makers sufficient measure?

The following dialogue, contributed by Drew McNeill (1996), indicates multilevel inner growth, an awareness of lower level moral values that are rejected by the inner agent of healing, and an aim to identify with and make whole the suffering body:

“The Telephone Booth”

One hot day in the middle of nowhere, there was an air conditioned phone booth. A small frog, who was getting very hot jumping on the side of the road, went in the booth. Realizing it was air conditioned, he decided to stay. Then a snake slithered in.

“Ahhhhh ....” It was nice and cool. But the frog was so greedy, he wanted the booth all for himself.

“But, but, can I eat the toads that try to eat you,” said the snake.

“Well, ok,” said the frog.

A mole ran in, “Yes! It’s cool in here!”

“Get out!” said you know who.

“But I can dig you a pool,” said the mole.

“Well, ok,” said the frog.

An iguana walked in.

“No, you cannot stay in!” said the frog.

“But I can climb to the phone when you want to make a call,” said the iguana.

“Oh,” said the wind.

The booth was getting pretty full, so you can imagine what the frog thought when a rhino came in.

“No NO NO!” said the frog.

“But can but away cars and people,” said the rhino.

“Well, ok,” said the frog.

“Squeeze!”

The rhino went in. It was such a tight squeeze, the rhino’s horn kept hitting the re-dial button. He hit it so much that the power went out all around the world. Because of the power outage, a dam broke, a flood came, and it washed the animals out of the booth! It was even cooler in the water!

True to force the world that the abductor/oppressor creates suddenly conspires against him. All the abducted creatures enact the choices that the dialogue-maker implicitly rejects. True to the agent of healing within the dialogue-maker, the reader is invited to cocreate a better world.

This dialogue was written before the maker was introduced to Burke’s rhetoric of empathic identification. It is an effectively created dialogue, re-cog-nizing the ancient myth of Persephone abducted and the ancient biblical story of the flood. How could practice with Burke’s rhetoric improve this dialogue-maker’s interpretation skills? What effects did subsequent practice with the rhetoric have upon the cognitive and multi-level inner growth of this highly creative student? Were effects short- or long-term?

Nadia Danilenko-Dixon practiced Burke’s rhetoric to interpret literature and make dialogues beginning in 1996. During 1998, she composed a dialogue that unfolds the story of Dana’s visit to former Dalmatia, now Croatia. The story begins with a moral question:

As Dana flew on her carpet. The wind asked, “What now? I left my life behind back there in Iran. So what did I leave it for?”

“Oh,” said the wind, “you haven’t left your life behind back there. You gave yourself a chance to start a new one, one that has more freedom involved.”

“What’s freedom?” asked Dana.

The wind started to wonder, “How can anyone not know what freedom is?” But he explained it to her anyway. “Freedom is a choice…”

The story unfolds through many conversations and a series of choices until the protagonist’s and antagonist’s choices fulfill the author’s moral ideal of “caring for everyone.”

The protagonist, Dana, chooses to enact her care for a mean, old Dalmatian named Jaws Barkerly, who managed to have her and her best friend arrested and locked up in prison:

After thinking for awhile, Dana decided not to take revenge on Jaws when she got out of prison, but to try and help him. “So he’s nicer again,” she day-dreamed. “That way, nothing awful like this would happen to her and Dipstick again.”

After thinking about Jaws, Dana began to realize what the wind meant about freedom. Her choice not to take revenge on Jaws but to try to help him was a free choice, even though she was not enjoying freedom right now...

Like Dana, Jaws Barkerly meets the wind, who helps him to realize that the Dalmatian people truly care about him. Finding care within himself as well, Jaws chooses to show his care for Dana and Dipstick by releasing them from charges and imprisonment. This choice unweaves his former act of retribution, the act which put them in prison.

When both Dana and Jaws choose to enact their moral compassion, both are free. Especially Dana is free to play and to continue her journey with the wind and her best friend, Dipstick. Their choices release the higher moral identity, the agent of healing within the dialogue-maker, whose highest moral ideal has been fulfilled by the story’s whole action.

The action also fulfills the story’s underlying motives: The motive of play, which is moral constraint, and the motive to heal the suffering body, named Jaws Barkerly, whose depressed condition was caused by abandonment. With the completion of this story, the dialogue-maker enacted not only her highest moral ideal, but the levels of communication that interpret the action.

Two years of practice with the rhetoric, then, was a significant time for Danilenko-Dixon, allowing her to realize her own self-differentiation through dialogue-making, enact her highest moral ideal, and interpret or comprehend a full action of moral constraint against harm. For another gifted learner, the significant time could be significantly different.

REFERENCES


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CALL FOR PAPERS

Acceleration in the Schools: Practices and Policies

Guest Editors: Edwina Pendarvis

Deadline: November 2000

During the 20th century, acceleration was one of the most thoroughly researched methods of modifying instruction for gifted students; yet, despite the research supporting it, this method is still a subject of controversy. The Roeper Review is planning a special issue to consider to what extent, in what fashion, and for whom acceleration is being implemented in the schools. We are particularly interested in studies focusing on acceleration in non-academic disciplines, such as the fine and performing arts, and studies focusing on acceleration of historically under-represented gifted students. Because acceleration is still only reluctantly provided by many school districts, we would also like to include articles describing the use of state or local policies to support acceleration as well as articles describing efforts to press acceleration through litigation or due process procedures.

Queries can be directed to:
Edwina Pendarvis, Special Education Department, Marshall University, Huntington, WV 25755, pendarvi@marshall.edu

Submit one manuscript to Edwina Pendarvis at the above address and four copies to Roeper Review, P.O. Box 329, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48303. Manuscripts should be in APA format and no more than 20 pages in length.

Gifted and Talented Students in Innovative School Programs and Homeschools

Guest Editors: Nina Buchanan and Bill Woerner

Including the impact on individual gifted/talented students:

Social/Emotional Adjustment
Academic and Talent-Area Achievement
Career Aspirations and Development

Deadline: October 2000

We welcome submission of case studies and articles by parents, practitioners and researchers both in gifted/talented education and outside the field that have implications for gifted education. Papers should be written in a direct, readable style and limited to 15 pages, double-spaced using no smaller than a 12 pt. font. Follow the Publications Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA).

Please submit 5 copies of your manuscript to the Roeper Review editorial address: PO Box 329, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48303. Manuscripts will be reviewed by the Roeper Editorial boards before being considered by the guest editors. Rejected manuscripts will not be returned unless the author provides a stamped, self-addressed envelope.