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# Philosophy and Creativity with Children: Lipman, Vygotsky, Rodari

## Introduction

In the book *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (2010), the American philosopher Martha Nussbaum pointed out a dangerous tendency that has a destructive effect on democracy: “The humanities and the arts are being cut away, in both primary/secondary and college/university education, in virtually every nation of the world”.<sup>1</sup> This tendency also affects the teaching of philosophy, which is still considered unnecessary and unusable for practical life. This paper, on the other hand, aims to show the reasons why philosophy should be studied at all levels of schools and how it can be practiced with children.

In the mentioned book, Nussbaum dedicated one chapter to “Socratic Pedagogy: The Importance of Argument”, where she highlights the importance of Socrates and his method:

One of the reasons people have insisted on giving all undergraduates a set of courses in philosophy and other subjects in the humanities is that they

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<sup>1</sup> Martha Nussbaum, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (Princeton N. J.: Princeton University Press, 2010), 2.

believe such courses, through both content and pedagogy, will stimulate students to think and argue for themselves, rather than defer to tradition and authority – and they believe that the ability to argue in this Socratic way is, as Socrates proclaimed, valuable for democracy.<sup>2</sup>

However, Socratic ability to think is not supported in a world aimed at maximizing economic growth, because we cannot measure it through standardized tests. Nevertheless, we can find schools where the Socratic method has become part of the teaching. Among examples of philosophers returning to Socratic pedagogy, Nussbaum described the activity of Matthew Lipman.<sup>3</sup>

American philosopher Matthew Lipman developed the Philosophy for Children curriculum at the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children at Montclair State College in New Jersey. Lipman included philosophy as a separate teaching subject already in kindergartens and elementary schools. However, Lipman's goal was not to teach children about great thinkers from the history of philosophy, but rather to have teachers conduct a lively dialogue with children using the Socratic method.<sup>4</sup> For this purpose, Lipman produced a series of books to practice Socratic pedagogy. In addition, Lipman found similarities between his and Vygotsky's theories and began collaborating with Soviet pedagogists who were interested in Lipman's philosophy for children.

This article focuses on the topic of teaching philosophy to children as a dialogue as well, but unlike Lipman, emphasis is placed on the use of fairy tales written by universally recognized writers. The reason for this choice is that interest in reading paper books is decreasing and children are mainly focused on obtaining information from the Internet.<sup>5</sup> This paper aims to point out the possibility of using fairy tales not only for the purpose of supporting critical and creative thinking, but also as an inspiration for reading books. In particular, the story of Pinocchio, which has been reworked in various ways, is very suitable for working with children. In addition, Pinocchio has recently attracted the interest of philosophers as well. For example, Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben interpreted Pinocchio's adventures as a kind of initiation into life itself in his book *Pinocchio. The Adventures of a Puppet, Doubly Commented Upon and Triply Illustrated*. The Czech philosopher Tereza Matějčková

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<sup>2</sup> Ibidem, 47–48.

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem, 73–75.

<sup>4</sup> The BBC made a documentary "Philosophy for Children – Socrates for six-year-olds" in which Lipman demonstrates his method on children.

<sup>5</sup> For problems related to the Internet, see Spitzer, *Digitální demence*.

also dedicated her essay to Pinocchio and focused on Agamben's interpretation.<sup>6</sup>

The importance of classic fairy tales as a tool for supporting critical and creative thinking is described using the example of the story of Pinocchio written by two Italian writers for children Carlo Collodi (1826–1890) and Gianni Rodari (1920–1980). Collodi's book *The Adventures of Pinocchio* is an excellent tool for promoting philosophical reflection, and during my practice of philosophy for children it was the most requested fairy tale by teachers. The choice of the story of Pinocchio is also based on the philosophy workshops for children that I have practiced in kindergartens and elementary schools since 2022.

The present article begins with an introduction to Lipman's and Vygotsky's theories,<sup>7</sup> continues with Gianni Rodari's ideas in relation to Vygotsky for promoting imagination and creativity in children, and the theoretical part finishes with the story of Pinocchio as a tool for the unification of critical and creative thinking through teaching. The article is supplemented with concrete examples from my workshops.

## 1. Lipman and Vygotsky

In 1991, two observers from the Soviet Union, Dr. Arkady Margolis, a psychologist, and Dr. Nina Yulina (1927–2012), a professor of philosophy, arrived at the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children at nearby Montclair State College. The New York Times informed the American public about this visit in the article "Giving Soviets a Lesson in Thinking", published on 30 January 1991:

In recent years the Soviets have tried to open their rigidly controlled education system, in which every school teaches the same thing from the same textbooks. To broaden their ideas the Soviets have entered agreements with the United States and other countries. Most involve teacher exchanges, but the agreement between the Soviet Academy of Pedagogical Sciences and the

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<sup>6</sup> Tereza Matějčková, "Pinocchio se vrací. Proč má i naše srdce zdřevnatět", *Host* 5 (2023).

<sup>7</sup> Theoretically, I base my observations on the theories of Vygotsky and this paper is a continuation of my previous studies in the field of creative thinking and studies of Vygotsky's psychology (viz Naldoniová 2016, 2017, 2018). Vygotsky's theories influenced also Matthew Lipman who is a founder of Philosophy for Children (P4C).

institute is one of the first to involve a curriculum intended to reach directly into Soviet schools.<sup>8</sup>

The Institute was founded by Matthew Lipman in 1974. Lipman was open to collaborating with Soviet teachers. For this purpose, he visited Moscow's School 91 where he demonstrated his methods in October 1990.<sup>9</sup> According to the newspaper report, "Professor Lipman said that some Soviet educators have long believed that children should be exposed to ideas when they are very young. But he said they were thwarted by conservatives who believed students should absorb information from their teachers, not engage in debate. [...] With the opening of Soviet society, there is pressure to change. 'When they discovered what we're doing, oh boy,' Professor Lipman said. 'It's a natural marriage'".<sup>10</sup>

In addition to the provocative article in the *New York Times*, Lipman describes his experience in Russia in the book *Natasha. Vygotskian Dialogues*, which was written in 1991. During this period Lipman co-signed an agreement with Vasily Vasilovich Davydov (1930–1998) who was a prominent Soviet educational psychologist in the Vygotskian tradition and the Vice President of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences in Moscow. In the book Lipman wanted to clarify his insight of V. V. Davydov's<sup>11</sup> educational psychology in relation to Vygotsky's principles. In the preface to the book, Lipman writes:

I wanted to see if I could demonstrate some of Vygotsky's principles in the form of a fictional thought-experiment – for example, that thinking is the internalization of speech, and that reciprocal behavior plays an important role in learning to think.<sup>12</sup>

Vygotsky replaced Piaget's theories that dominated psychology from the 1930s to the 1970s. Piaget was convinced that young children are

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<sup>8</sup> Anthony Depalma, "Giving Soviets a Lesson in Thinking", *New York Times*, 30.01.1991, access 8.05.2023. <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/01/30/education/giving-soviets-a-lesson-in-thinking.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>11</sup> Vasily Vasilovich Davydov (1930–1998) was a prominent Soviet educational psychologist in the Vygotskian tradition. Lipman co-signed an agreement with Davydov, when he was a Vice President of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences in Moscow. In: Matthew Lipman, *Natasha: Vygotskian dialogues* (New York–London: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1996), xi.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, vii.

incapable of understanding abstract ideas.<sup>13</sup> Piaget's *The language and thought of the child* was published in 1926 and his theory of egocentric speech attracted much attention in psychology at the time. According to Piaget, the child speaks egocentrically until the age of 6–7, even if he is in society. After this age, the child begins to develop dialogic speech and the socialized speech characteristic of adults emerges. In 1932, Vygotsky wrote the preface to the Russian edition of this book, but at the same time he criticized Piaget's theory. According to Vygotsky, human speech has had a social function since the beginning.<sup>14</sup> In contrast to Piaget, "Vygotsky attempted to analyze what he called the internal development of the child's activity".<sup>15</sup> In Vygotsky's view, "verbal thinking represents an internalization of speech" and "reflection is an internalization of argument"<sup>16</sup> and he continues to explain:

We can formulate the general genetic law of cultural development as follows: every function in the cultural development of the child appears on the stage twice, in two planes, first, the social, then the psychological, first between people as an intermental category, then within the child as an intramental category. This pertains equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, to the formation of concepts, and to the development of will. We are justified in considering the thesis presented as a law, but it is understood that the transition from outside inward transforms the process itself, changes its structure and functions. Genetically, social relations, real relations of people, stand behind all the higher functions and their relations.<sup>17</sup>

Vygotsky and Piaget also differ in their relation to philosophy. While Piaget's was based on purely empirical facts, Vygotsky also referred to the importance of philosophy in connection with psychology:

(Piaget) wants to know of nothing but the facts. He consciously avoids generalizations, and is even more concerned about moving beyond the problems of psychology to those of related fields such as logic, epistemology, and the history of philosophy. In his view, the best foundation is pure empiricism.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Matthew Lipman, *Thinking in Education* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 39.

<sup>14</sup> Lev Semjonovič Vygotsky, *Psychologie myšlení a řeči* (Praha: Portál, 2004), 33–34.

<sup>15</sup> Vygotsky, *The Collected Works of L. S. Vygotsky. Volume 1*, 26.

<sup>16</sup> Vygotsky, *The Collected Works of L. S. Vygotsky. Volume 4*, 103.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, 106.

<sup>18</sup> Vygotsky, "Thinking and Speech", 54.

For Vygotsky, on the other hand, facts must be connected with philosophy, without which they could not be interpreted:

Fact and philosophy are directly interrelated. This is particularly true of facts such as those that Piaget has discovered, reported, and analyzed because they concern the development of the child's thinking. If we want to find the key to this rich collection of new fact, we must first clarify the philosophy of the fact, the philosophy of its acquisition and interpretation. Otherwise, the facts will remain silent and dead.<sup>19</sup>

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, dissatisfaction with Piagetian orthodoxy began to increase and Vygotsky's theory came to the fore in the USA.<sup>20</sup> Piaget's theory of developmental stages was overpassed by Vygotsky. Lipman pointed out that "it was only in the 1970s that educators began to suspect that students were in fact abstraction-deprived and that this might be remedied by teaching them reasoning through philosophy and philosophy through reasoning".<sup>21</sup>

In the same period, Lipman began to create philosophy for children. When Lipman had been a philosophy professor at Columbia University for fifteen years, he created the first didactic philosophical novel for children titled *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery*.<sup>22</sup> He intended to write the first book in Philosophy for Children curriculum for ages 11–12 and it was developed at the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children at Montclair State College in New Jersey.<sup>23</sup> *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* was published in 1969 and from this moment on Philosophy for Children entered many classrooms.<sup>24</sup>

The Philosophy for Children curriculum is composed of age-differentiated novels for the students and manuals for the teachers. *Harry Stottlemeier* was the first exemplar of the series of novels with the fictional character aimed to stimulate questioning and discussions in the classroom. The next novels were *Lisa*, an ethics reader for children aged 12–13, published in 1976; *Suki*, for children 14–15, published in 1978; *Mark*, for secondary school students, published in 1978; *Mark*, for chil-

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<sup>19</sup> Ibidem, 55.

<sup>20</sup> Lipman, *Thinking in Education*, 30.

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem, 40.

<sup>22</sup> Ann Sharp, Ronald Reed, *Studies in philosophy for children: Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), xiii.

<sup>23</sup> Viz <https://www.montclair.edu/iapc/>.

<sup>24</sup> Lipman, *Natasha: Vygotskian dialogues*, xix.

dren aged 16–17, published in 1979; *Pixie*, for children aged 9–10, in 1982; *Elfie*, for children aged 6–8, 1987, etc.

In Lipman's opinion, "probably the most common cause of miseducation" is "the failure to convert the classroom into a community of discursive inquiry".<sup>25</sup> Lipman took the phrase "community of inquiry" from American pragmatist philosopher Charles Peirce.<sup>26</sup> In Lipman's view, Athens of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C. and Florence of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. are good examples of "communities of inquiry in which discovery and invention everywhere stimulated fresh thinking, which, in turn, stimulated new discoveries and new inventions".<sup>27</sup> The community of inquiry is an ideal towards which teachers and students should strive.

Margolis focused on the features of the Lipman's Philosophy for Children program and he highlighted some aspects of the program. One of them is the age of children for philosophical thinking: "the most sensitive age span for philosophical reasoning is 6–10, when the child's intellectual curiosity is very strong".<sup>28</sup> The learning process should be an integrated process which comprehends self-correction, sensitivity to a context, ability to make judgments and basing judgments on criteria rather than rules. The most essential part of curriculum is the text:

Because the philosophical content must be made interesting and understandable to children, it is presented in the form of a novel, the main character of which are trying to solve age-appropriate and, at the same time, philosophically real problems.<sup>29</sup>

But also, the teacher has a special place in the Philosophy for Children program because "the teacher is neither an expert in the content of study [...] nor a judge who evaluates the student's thoughts and statements".<sup>30</sup> The teacher organizes discussions and helps practice thinking and collective reasoning in a group of children. Many of these features are common with the developmental model of education based on the cultural-historical approach.

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<sup>25</sup> Lipman, *Natasha: Vygotskian dialogues*, xii.

<sup>26</sup> Lizzy Lewis, Nick Chandley, *Philosophy for Children Through the Secondary Curriculum* (London: Continuum, 2012), 4.

<sup>27</sup> Lipman, *Natasha: Vygotskian dialogues*, xii.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, 122.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, 123.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, 124.

In Margolis' view, the activity theory "has a strong creative potential and interesting applications in the area of developmental instruction" and "in attempting to understand new models of education based on dialogue, such as 'developmental education', it would be productive to compare it to the Western Philosophy for Children model with which it shares many similar goals".<sup>31</sup>

Lipman probably did not have much success in Russia, but we still find one entry "Philosophy for Children" in the encyclopedia of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The author of the entry is Nina Stepanovna Yulina,<sup>32</sup> and she refers to her book *Filosofia dlia detei* (1996).<sup>33</sup>

Unlike Lipman, however, the Italian children's writer Gianni Rodari (1920–1980), who received the biennial Hans Christian Andersen Medal in 1970, has achieved huge success in Russia. He became famous in Russia even earlier than in Italy.<sup>34</sup> Rodari is considered Italy's most important 20<sup>th</sup>-century children's author. In the 1960s and 1970s, Rodari participated in conferences and meetings in schools. The notes based on these meetings were collected in *The Grammar of Phantasy* (1973). It was in *The Grammar of Fantasy* that Rodari pointed out the influence that Vygotsky had had on him.

## 2. Rodari and Vygotsky

While Lipman focused on Socratic pedagogy, community of inquiry and development of thinking, Gianni Rodari preferred to support creativity and imagination in children. That is why he approached psychology rather than philosophy:

A good manual of psychology (I use Gardner Murphy's *An Introduction to Psychology*, which is most helpful) can nowadays provide more information about the imagination than the entire history of philosophy up to Benedetto Croce. After him, there is still Bertrand Russell (*The Analysis of the Mind*) and John Dewey (*How We Think*). One can also benefit from reading L. S. Vygotsky's *The Psychology of Art* [...]. On the other hand, Vygotsky's book *The Imagination and Creativity of the Child* is a small jewel, which I believe, despite the fact that it is now somewhat old, has two great assets:

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<sup>31</sup> Lipman, *Natasha: Vygotskian dialogues*, 117.

<sup>32</sup> Viz <https://iphras.ru/nsyulina.htm>.

<sup>33</sup> Viz <https://iphlib.ru/library/collection/newphilenc/document/HASH-012ba3daf986377d05e1772b>.

<sup>34</sup> Lenka Naldoniová, "Kreativní fantazie Gianni Rodariho", *Studia Culturae* 31 (2017): 222.



first, it describes the imagination with clarity and simplicity as a process of the human mind; second, it recognizes that all human beings – and not just a privileged few (the artists) and a select few (determined through tests underwritten by some foundation) – have a common creative capacity. Whatever differences there are between human beings reveal themselves to be produced by social and cultural factors.<sup>35</sup>

The concept of creativity and imagination mentioned by Rodari refers to Vygotsky's theory of higher mental functions. Vygotsky distinguished between lower and higher mental functions. Lower mental functions are given to us biologically and are the same as in animals. Higher mental functions are developed from social interaction with other people and are based on history and culture: "it might be said that real, innate, natural, and biological processes belong to lower mental functions and cultural, historical, and social processes belong to the higher".<sup>36</sup> For a better overview, we can see the functions schematically as follows:<sup>37</sup>

#### **LOWER MENTAL FUNCTIONS**

MECHANICAL MEMORY

INVOLUNTARY ATTENTION

REPRODUCTIVE IMAGINATION

FIGURATIVE THINKING

LOWER FEELINGS

IMPULSIVE VOLITION

#### **HIGHER MENTAL FUNCTIONS**

LOGICAL MEMORY

VOLUNTARY ATTENTION

CREATIVE IMAGINATION

THINKING IN CONCEPTS

HIGHER FEELINGS

FORESIGHT VOLITION

Philosophy is therefore associated with the development of higher mental functions. However, the teacher is of great importance, who must stimulate the child so that higher mental functions can be developed. According to Vygotsky, a 3-year-old child has a turning point regarding teaching. During this period, it is already possible to implement a certain

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<sup>35</sup> Gianni Rodari, *The Grammar of Fantasy: An Introduction to the Art of Inventing Stories* (New York: Teachers & Writers Collaborative, 1996), 112.

<sup>36</sup> Vygotsky, *The Collected Works of L. S. Vygotsky. Volume 4*, 262.

<sup>37</sup> "Together with mechanical memory, logical memory was differentiated as its higher form, voluntary attention was added above involuntary attention, creative imagination was added above reproductive imagination, thinking in concepts rose as a second story above figurative thinking, lower feelings were symmetrically supplemented with higher feelings, impulsive volition, with foresight". *Ibidem*, 6–7.

education and training program. Until the age of three, children learn according to their own program based on the impulses they get from their surroundings. At school, another extreme occurs, when the child is subordinate to the school and the teacher. Between these two extremes is the period when the child passes from the spontaneous period to the reactive period. Vygotsky called this intermediate period spontaneously reactive and summarized his thought in a paper presented at the All-Russian conference on preschool education:

the early-age child learns according to his own program, the school-age child learns according to the teacher's program, but the preschool child is able to learn to the extent that the teacher's program becomes his own program.<sup>38</sup>

Vygotsky advanced the concept called "the zone of proximal development" which means the "difference between the child's actual level of development and the level of performance that he achieves in collaboration with the adult"<sup>39</sup>:

The zone of proximal development – which determines the domain of transitions that are accessible to the child – is a defining feature of the relationship between instruction and development. What lies in the zone of proximal development at one stage is realized and moves to the level of actual development at a second. In other words, what the child is able to do in collaboration today he will be able to do independently tomorrow. Instruction and development seem to be related in the same way that the zone of proximal development and the level of actual development are related. The only instruction which is useful in childhood is that which moves ahead of development, that which leads it. However, it is only possible to teach a child when he is able to learn. Instruction is possible only where there is a potential for imitation. This means that instruction must be oriented to the lower threshold of the developmental cycle which has already occurred. Still, development depends not so much on matured as maturing functions, since it always begins with what has not yet matured in the child. The potentials for instruction are determined by the zone of proximal development.<sup>40</sup>

Borrowing Vygotsky's terminology, we can say that Lipman's philosophy for children and Rodari's grammar of fantasy stimulate "lower mental functions" in "the zone of mental development" to develop "higher mental functions". At this point, I want to show, using the ex-

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<sup>38</sup> Lev Vygotsky, *Umstvennoe razvitie detei v protsesse obutchenia* (Moskva–Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe utchebno-pedagogicheskoe izdatelstvo, 1935), 22.

<sup>39</sup> Vygotsky, "Thinking and Speech", 209.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, 211.

ample of Pinocchio, that classic fairy tales can be an excellent tool for both philosophical dialogue and the development of creative thinking.

### 3. Philosophy and fairy tales

Gianni Rodari published only one theoretical work, *The Grammar of Fantasy: An Introduction to the Art of Inventing Stories*, where he described his theories for promoting children's imagination and creativity.<sup>41</sup> In the preface of *The Grammar of Fantasy* Rodari expressed his admiration for Novalis and he was particularly impressed by Novalis' fragment: "If there were a theory of the fantastic like there is in the case of logic, then we would be able to discover the art of invention".<sup>42</sup>

Rodari concentrated on developing the theory of the fantastic and for this purpose also used popular folk tales: "Popular folk tales have entered imaginative writing from the oral tradition as raw material".<sup>43</sup> In Rodari's view, this raw material was used also by Carlo Collodi:

Collodi's *Pinocchio* took its life from the Tuscan landscape, from the tones and colors of Tuscan folklore. The Tuscan folk tales provided Collodi's narrative with a profound substratum of raw material, but the folklore was only one of the elements of raw material in the language, for the raw material is somewhat complex, as one can perceive a posteriori from the different interpretations that *Pinocchio* has received and continues to receive".<sup>44</sup>

Rodari also refers to the Brothers Grimm and Andersen, whom he compares to Collodi. These three authors are classified by Rodari among the liberators of fairy tales from pedagogical purposes of public schools:

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<sup>41</sup> Since the book was not translated into Czech, I wrote the chapter "Kreativní fantazie Gianni Rodariho" ("*Gianni Rodari's Creative Fantasy*") (2016) to introduce the techniques described by Rodari to the Czech reader, especially teachers and parents. While Rodari is almost unknown in the Czech Republic, his books were a huge success in Russia, which I described in the following article "Dzhani Rodari i detskaia kreativnost' v Sovetskom Soiuze" ["Gianni Rodari and Children's Creativity in the Soviet Union"] (2017). This article was followed up by the study "Spinoza a Vygotskij v kontextu sovětské filosofie a psychologie" ("*Spinoza and Vygotskij in the Context of Soviet Philosophy and Psychology*") (2018).

<sup>42</sup> Rodari, *The Grammar of Fantasy: An Introduction to the Art of Inventing Stories*, 1.

<sup>43</sup> Ibidem, 30.

<sup>44</sup> Ibidem, 31.

The Brothers Grimm, Andersen, and Collodi – with regard to fairy tales – have been among the great liberators of children’s literature, freeing it from the pedagogical tasks that were assigned to it as public schools began to be established.<sup>45</sup>

According to Rodari, Collodi gave the children the role of protagonists. So the children are not presented as the teacher would like them to be, but Collodi showed how the children really are. It will give the children a sense of freedom, feeling of understanding by others, and therefore the story of Pinocchio works even in the case when the children grow up in poor and unsuitable conditions. For example, Italian actor, playwright and theater director Marco Baliani used the power of the story about Pinocchio in the project Pinocchio Nero (Black Pinocchio) to help African children in Nairobi. He rehabilitated a group of street children through the theatre.<sup>46</sup> In fact, Pinocchio is a very suitable book for working with children of both preschool and school age.<sup>47</sup> Preschool children can relate to the main character who goes through various crises but eventually finds a way to become human.

In Pinocchio we also find more complex passages that we can discuss with children in the first grade of elementary school. In chapter 16 titled “The Beautiful Child with blue hair has the puppet taken down: has him put to bed and calls in the three doctors to know if he is alive or dead”, for example, we find these three answers from the “doctors” that make children think deeper. The first answer to the question whether Pinocchio is alive or dead is: “To my belief the puppet is already quite dead; but if unfortunately he should not be dead, then it would be a sign that he is still alive!”<sup>48</sup> The answer of the second doctor: “‘I regret’, said the Owl, ‘to be obliged to contradict the Crow, my illustrious friend and colleague; but in my opinion the puppet is still alive: but if unfortunately he should not be alive, then it would be a sign that he is dead indeed!’”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Ibidem, 31.

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.indigofilm.it/en/production/black-pinocchio/>.

<sup>47</sup> During my workshops, I used three stories: Pinocchio, the Wizard of Oz and Pippi Longstocking, which I adapted differently to the age of the children and to different situations. In this article, I focus on the experiences that arose from discussions with children solely regarding the story of Pinocchio. Viz note 9 of the present article.

<sup>48</sup> Carlo Collodi, *The Story of a Puppet or the Adventures of Pinocchio* (London: The Fisher Unwin, 1892), 74.

<sup>49</sup> Ibidem, 74.

At this point, we can ask the children to explain the doctors' answers in their own words.<sup>50</sup> The help comes in the third cricket's answer: "the wisest thing a prudent doctor can do, when he does not know what he is talking about, is to be silent". It seems that the cricket precedes Wittgenstein's last proposition from the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*: "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent".<sup>51</sup> The cricket sometimes has the function of a philosopher, at other times it represents the voice of conscience that educates Pinocchio.

One of the difficulties of working with young children is keeping their attention. If the children start to get bored during overly philosophical questions, it is advisable to change the topic immediately. For elementary school children, it is possible to follow up on Collodi's *Pinocchio* with a version written by Gianni Rodari. Rodari's story is titled "Pinocchio the Cunning" ("Pinocchio il furbo")<sup>52</sup> and has three different endings. Children can be motivated by the teacher to create their own endings. It is one of the techniques described by Rodari in *The Grammar of Fantasy*:

Even when a fairy tale is finished, there is always the possibility of an "after." The characters are ready to act. We know how they relate to one another. The simple introduction of a new element sets the entire internal mechanism in motion once again, as all those writers who have written or conceived a sequel to *Pinocchio* certainly know.<sup>53</sup>

#### 4. Philosophy for children workshops

The University of Ostrava offers lectures and workshops as part of the University for Schools project. The offer also includes Philosophy for Children workshops, which I have prepared for kindergartens and primary schools.<sup>54</sup> Within the University for Schools project, 20 workshops

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<sup>50</sup> During my workshops, it happened that the children split into two halves, where one claimed that according to the doctors Pinocchio was dead, the other that he was alive. Rarely, a child responded that the doctors did not actually give any answer.

<sup>51</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench Trubner & Co. LTD, 1922), 90.

<sup>52</sup> The story is included in the Italian book *Mago Girò (Magician Girò)* and in the Czech book *Pohádky na hraní (Fairy tales for playing)*.

<sup>53</sup> Rodari, *The Grammar of Fantasy*, 36.

<sup>54</sup> Viz <https://univerzita-proskoly.osu.cz/kategorie/zakladni-skoly/zs-filozofie-workshop/>.

in 9 kindergartens and primary schools were conducted from May 2022 to May 2023.<sup>55</sup> Specifically, the following schools were visited where philosophy for children through fairy tales was practiced:<sup>56</sup> MŠ I. Herrmannova, Ostrava-Hrabůvka (4 workshops); MŠ a ZŠ Andělská Hora (Bruntál) (1 workshop); ZŠ Via Montessori (Hlučín) (1 workshop); MŠ Mjr. Nováka, Ostrava-Hrabůvka (2 workshops); MŠ Mitušova 6, Ostrava-jih (3 workshops); ZŠ PRIGO, Ostrava-Mariánské Hory (1 workshop); ZŠ Trojanovice (4 workshops); MŠ a ZŠ Kujavy (2 workshops); MŠ a ZŠ Hladké Životice (2 workshops) using four fairy tales: Collodi's *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, Lindgren's *Pippi Longstocking*, Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, Rodari's *Pinocchio the Cunning*. These authors were deliberately chosen for their popularity in different countries (Italy, USA, Sweden). With the older children the authors of the fairy tales are put in a historical and geographical context. This is used to discuss the topic of reality and facts so that the children can understand the difference between facts and fantasy/imagination.

The most important starting point is to engage the children. Various activities must be prepared to keep the children's attention. During the Pinocchio workshops, a two-minute video in which the Italian actor Totò plays Pinocchio<sup>57</sup> was shown at first to get the children interested right from the beginning of the workshop, but that turned out to be a mistake. Some children were disappointed when it was time to begin reading. The problem was solved by using the video at the end of the workshop as a final surprise. When the projector was used, where pictures of the main characters of the fairy tales were shown, the children listened to the reading without any problems. Without the projector, it was more difficult to keep the children's attention.

The workshops usually begin by asking who does not like fairy tales. The children are immediately willing to talk, so this is an opportunity to understand whether and what the children read and whether they know the fairy tale that will be discussed. Then it is time to move on to

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<sup>55</sup> Information about my workshops can be found on the websites of various schools, for example:

<http://zsandel.net/2022/06/14/filozofie-pro-deti/>

<https://mjrnovaka.zskrestova.cz/pinocchio-filosofie-pro-deti/>

<https://www.msmitusova6.cz/fotogalerie/trida-zabicka/-pinocchio.html>

<https://iherrmannova.zskrestova.cz/pipi-dlouha-puncocha-u-delfinku/>

<sup>56</sup> In this article, I focus only on the workshops in which I used fairy tales but over the years I have conducted many other seminars aimed at popularizing philosophy in primary and secondary schools.

<sup>57</sup> Viz movie *Totò a Colori* (1952).

the main topic of the book, from which excerpts are selected according to the age of the children. A combination of the reading is conducted with personal retelling of the story, which is sometimes deliberately altered to create tension and surprise. When the children start to enjoy the story, it is time to move on to philosophical topics. The children are asked questions such as “Which of the fairy-tale characters behaves like a friend?”, “What is good behavior and why?”, “What is reality and what is fantasy in the story?”, “Who is a good person?” etc. At the end of the workshop, the children are asked to draw, for example, one real and one unreal object, or who/what is most valuable to the main character and to the children in their personal lives. The children are thus active during the entire workshop, which lasts 45 minutes.

While the results may be hard to measure, the reaction of the children shows that the workshop produces extremely positive outcomes. In addition to the children’s enthusiasm to engage in discussion and drawings during the workshops, they often eagerly wait after the workshop to ask where they can find a library to borrow the book, and one library<sup>58</sup> confirmed the growing requests in the book *Pinocchio’s Adventures*.

## Conclusion

At a time when children are encouraged to spend as much time as possible on the Internet, books are becoming less popular. All the more we must try to attract children to quality reading, but it must be fun for them. For this purpose, the role of the teacher is fundamental. On the one hand, we can use Lipman’s examples of teaching philosophy to children. On the other hand, we can enrich Lipman’s techniques with those described by Gianni Rodari, because they are funny:

By using stories and those fantastic methods that produce them, we help children to enter reality through the window instead of through the door. It is more fun. Therefore, it is more useful.<sup>59</sup>

It is necessary to awaken children’s interest in reading, because reading supports critical and creative thinking, and children learn to concentrate. Through identification with the protagonist they can overcome their problems and crises, they learn empathy, think about good and

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<sup>58</sup> Ostrava City Library, Dr. Martíňka’s branch.

<sup>59</sup> Rodari, *The Grammar of Fantasy*, 20.

evil, etc. With the help of reading and the teacher, children develop their lower mental functions to achieve higher mental functions. And for that purpose, it is necessary for teachers to have an education not only in pedagogy and psychology, but also in philosophy.

The humanities are the foundation of democracy because a democratic citizen is the result of education. As Edgar Morin showed in his complexity theory, we need a new type of interdisciplinary education: we do not need a “head well filled”, but “head well made”.<sup>60</sup> And to make our “head well done”, the theories of Lipman, Vygotsky and Rodari are still relevant and their potential has not yet been fully utilized. Philosophy for children and creative thinking can help children not only to develop higher mental functions, but also to develop the wholeness of the complex human being which is far from the image of a puppet.

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<sup>60</sup> Morin, *La testa ben fatta*, 15.



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## Summary

The article is focused on the topic of how to practice philosophy and support creativity in kindergartens and elementary schools with the help of fairy tales, in particular with the help of the story of Pinocchio. Emphasis is placed on Lipman's activity of philosophy for children, which he tried to connect with Vygotsky's theories. The aim of the article is to show the importance of developing critical thinking in the form of dialogue in connection with creative thinking, which Gianni Rodari focused on. Rodari was based on Vygotsky's theory of imagination as a process of the human mind, which is a characteristic of all human being.

**Keywords:** philosophy for children, creativity, imagination, Matthew Lipman, Lev Vygotsky, Gianni Rodari