

jazzing philosophy with children: an improvisational path for a new pedagogy

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abstract

This paper is based on the content of a talk held at the ICPIC Conference in Madrid, titled "Improvising as a way of inquiring and inventing" in which a jazz metaphor for education and philosophy is introduced. The arguments proposed are also adapted to respond to some critical issues put forward by Gert Biesta in his paper about philosophical work with children and the related experience in schools through philosophy for/with children programs (BIESTA 2017b). My contribution to the discussion deals with two main foci. The first one is theoretical, and considers improvisation as expression of human cognitive constructivism and a form of adaptive/exaptive human agency in the environment. Improvisation is interpreted as a privileged form of "complex thinking," in which the three components identified by Lipman--critical, creative and caring thinking--are integrated and mutually implemented. The second focus is pragmatic and proposes eight "jazz" features that embody education in the dimension of improvisation, opening teaching to the authentic experience of changing implied in growing/aging, and in which the stability of identities is always at risk. A *jazzing* way for doing with children is proposed as an antidote to the risk of *learnification* of education and *capitalization* of human skills--to which, according to Biesta, philosophy for/with children seems to be exposed in its school application--while proposing a jazz framework for a new "poor pedagogy."

keywords: improvisation, complex thinking, jazz

jazzeando filosofia com crianças: um caminho improvisacional para uma nova pedagogia

resumo

Este artigo é baseado no conteúdo de uma apresentação que ocorreu no Congresso do ICPIC em Madri, intitulada "O improviso como meio de questionar e inventar", na qual uma metáfora do jazz é introduzida para a educação e a filosofia. Os argumentos propostos são também adaptados para responder a alguns aspectos críticos levantados por Gert Biesta na sua palestra sobre o trabalho filosófico com crianças, assim como a experiência relacionada nas escolas através dos programas envolvendo filosofia com e para crianças (BIESTA 2017b). Minha contribuição à discussão trata de dois pontos principais. O primeiro é teórico e diz respeito à improvisação como expressão do construtivismo cognitivo humano e uma forma de agência humana adaptativa/exaptativa no ambiente. A improvisação é interpretada como uma forma privilegiada de "pensamento complexo", no qual os três componentes identificados por Lipman - pensamento crítico, criativo e cuidador - estão integrados e mutuamente implementados. O segundo foco é pragmático e propõe oito características do jazz que incorporam à educação as dimensões da improvisação, abrindo o ensino à experiência autêntica de mudança implicada em crescer/envelhecer, e na qual a estabilidade das identidades está constantemente em risco. Um modo "jazzing" de lidar com as crianças é proposto como

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sendo um antídoto ao risco da "aprendizagem" da educação e capitalização das habilidades humanas - às quais, de acordo com Biesta, a filosofia para/com crianças parece estar exposta em sua aplicação nas escolas -, enquanto propõe um estrutura de jazz para uma nova "pedagogia pobre".

palavras-chave: improvisação, pensamento complexo, jazz

jazzeando filosofía con niños: un camino improvisante para una nueva pedagogía

resumen

Este artículo se basa en el contenido de la conferencia que ofrecí en el Congreso del ICPIIC de Madrid, titulada "Improvisar como forma de indagar e inventar" en la que introduce la metáfora del jazz para la educación y la filosofía. Los argumentos propuestos también están adaptados para responder a algunas cuestiones críticas planteadas por Gert Biesta en su conferencia sobre el trabajo filosófico con los niños y la consecuente experiencia en las escuelas a través de programas de filosofía para / con niños (BIESTA 2017b). Mi contribución a la discusión trata de dos focos principales. El primero es teórico, y considera la improvisación como expresión del constructivismo cognitivo humano y como una forma de adaptación / exaptación de la agencia humana en el medio ambiente. La improvisación es interpretada como una forma privilegiada de "pensamiento complejo", en la cual los tres componentes identificados por Lipman - pensamiento crítico, creativo y preocupación - se integran y se implementan mutuamente. El segundo enfoque es pragmático y propone ocho características "jazzísticas" que encarnan la educación en la dimensión de la improvisación, abriendo la enseñanza a la auténtica experiencia de cambio implícita en el crecimiento/envejecimiento y en la que la estabilidad de las identidades está siempre en riesgo. Se propone una forma jazzística de hacer con los niños como antídoto para el riesgo de la *aprendizaje* de la educación y de la *capitalización* de las habilidades humanas - a los que, según Biesta, la filosofía para / con niños parece estar expuesta en su aplicación escolar - a la vez que proponemos un marco de jazz para una nueva "pedagogía pobre".

palabras clave: improvisación; pensamiento complejo; jazz.



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As it happened last June at the ICPIC Conference in Madrid, my preferred response to Biesta's notes on Philosophy for/with children remains the content of the talk "Improvisation as a way of inquiring and inventing," which was scheduled in the programme right after his invited address. I tried immediately to transform the talk into an opportunity to dialogue with him, a dialogue that continues in this special issue of *Childhood & Philosophy* as a polyphony with many other friends involved in this topic.

On that occasion a *jazzing* view of philosophical practice with children was presented, starting from the metaphor of "education as jazz" which I had already offered in a recent book (SANTI & ZORZI, 2016). There, eight "jazzy" ways to escape the monological tradition of teaching and learning in education were proposed (SANTI, 2016), which may be offered as a possible response to the risks to which Philosophy for/with children is liable. The first is visible in Biesta's critique of the *instrumentalisation* of philosophy for/with children when it is transformed into a learning outcomes curriculum through a *mentalization* of thinking (BIESTA 2017b, p. 418). The second risk is that of reducing philosophical work with children to an exercise in fostering critical skills (BIESTA, 2017b, p. 418). This reductionism is at the base of a third risk highlighted by Biesta----that is, the *learnification* of contemporary education (BIESTA, 2017, p. 422), which corresponds to a sort of "inverted reductionism" whereby philosophy for/with children is reduced to a strategy for "teaching thinking skills." In fact, all these reductionisms emerge as consistent risks in many applications of the Lipman Curriculum - and of other similar proposals -- which end up transforming philosophical practice with children in school into a human capital device. More recently, the "human capital" framework and its devices seem less unopposable as they face a crisis of competence and legitimacy (BIGGERI & SANTI, 2012). It is a known fact that in times of crisis questions surrounding education become increasingly urgent and crucial, and calls for new paradigms emerge and call for resolution. The

frameworks that lead to a variety of pedagogical models could orient education toward, in Biesta's words, a more "grownup" praxis (BIESTA, 2017b, p. 430) as opposed to a "developmental" one: that is, toward transformative versus instructional learning; toward personal individuation versus communal socialization; and toward subjective determination versus environmental evolution. The various theories of knowledge that lie behind these different frameworks are also responsible for the reduction of education to mere instruction, and for the various methods of teaching and learning applied in school, which are conceived and proposed as monological, dialogical or polyphonic processes (PASGAARD, 2009; WEGERIF, 2011).

At the core of Biesta's argument is claim that the implementation of critical thinking programs (philosophy for/with children included) in schools is based mainly on the reductionism of education to learning (and teaching) outcomes, which implies a linear and sequential set of approaches to curriculum development. These approaches are coherent within the current race for the capitalization of knowledge and know-how, and persist as the dominant aims of educational/instructional policies.

The upheaval affecting today's globalized world demands new paradigms that afford fresh ways of explaining and orienting human "development" (or even better, history) in accordance with a stochastic, complex and emergent view of evolution in which creativity and emotion play a crucial role. A response to these socio-cultural emergencies demands thought-provoking proposals for curriculum design, such as have been recently elaborated, for example, by WIGGINS & McTIGHE, 1998). The underlying acknowledgment guiding these educational proposals is that instruction, like life, cannot always be planned in advance, especially when students are being taught "skills" for interacting with real-life situations and problems (DONMOYER, 1983; JACKSON, 1977; LORTIE, 1975). Seen from this perspective, the idea that instruction should be considered both as a system of "ordered experience in the disorder of life" and/or "a disordering experience in the order of life" becomes theoretically and practically

interesting. Although these proposals retain the teaching of skills as a fundamental aim of the instructional curriculum, they have the advantage of introducing the idea of “growth” into the educational process, an idea lost some time in the last century, and one that is crucial to Biesta’s critique of *learnification*, which has led to the current mercification of achievement.

In fact fostering creativity means, not just promoting “innovation”; creativity has less to do with what is *original* --new in comparison with other products already available on the market-- than *originary*, emerging from authentic generativity (see INGOLD, 2014). As a human expression of the disposition to wonder and to respond to the novel, creativity involves critical and emotional dimensions of thinking (what Lipman calls “complex thinking”), and calls for educational support, both for the achievement of extraordinary ends (BAILIN, 1988) and for the recognition of the extraordinary means offered by the ordinary (LEDDY, 2012). Such support presents educators with an interesting design challenge, in which the need to plan the best desirable future intersects with the aspiration to have a better possible past. This seems particularly in agreement with the Biesta’s statement about the limits of “adaptive learning” (BIESTA, 2017b, p. 433) that dominate today’s curriculum design and practice. As highlighted in his paper, the main assumption of the evolutionary perspective on education is that through being positioned in different learning environments learners can become more effective at adaptation to changing enviroining conditions. This assumption is questioned by Biesta, who advanced the appropriate questions concerning the issue: “*Is this is an adequate conception of students in educational relationships? Is this an adequate view of human beings being-in-the-world?*” For Biesta, it is not. While he concedes “that learning can be a richer concept than what is captured in the idea of intelligent adaptation,” he emphasises how pervasive this idea has become in contemporary learning theory, and argues that “to the extent to which our understanding of learning relies on the paradigm of intelligent adaptation, it is significantly lacking, both humanely and educationally” (BIESTA, 2017b, p. 423).

Biesta's response to the question of learning as adaptation was quite critical for two orders of reasons, which were summarized in this way:

1. the question that the "intelligent adaptive system" paradigm cannot issue is whether the environment is in fact worth adapting to;
2. the one event that cannot occur in this paradigm is reciprocity: the system cannot be taught, cannot be spoken to, cannot be addressed.

The first question challenges an entirely functional paradigm aimed at survival, not life (this is the built-in algorithm); the second suggests that the world and other human beings can only appear as obstacles--something to adjust to. To make his point clear, Biesta refers us to Dewey and Mead on communication, opposing to the "adaptive" view of education a perspective in which world and other humans are something/one I am in communication with; something/one who speaks to me, who addresses me, who touches me, who asks for me, who calls upon the unique one within me, as Levinas suggested (BIESTA, 2017b, p. 426). I must say that I have really appreciated this point. I agree with Biesta about the danger of reducing education to adaptation to environment, and teaching to teachers' design of adaptable environments. In fact I consider these issues--of the relationship with the world as more than environment, and with others as much as peers--as the core issue of the global societal crisis which the third millennium inaugurated, and which corresponds, for me, to what Gould and Vrba (1982) called "the missing dimension of evolution"--that is, *exaptation*.

Exaptation may be viewed as a sort of creative adaptation which is not demanded or elicited by the environment; it consists in a variation in normalized, regular function, and a veering toward unexplored and "needless" uses; it would correspond to what I would call "functioning serendipity." In fact for Gould and Vrba, to miss the dimension of exaptation means to lose the creative and unexpected dynamics of evolution, reducing its development to adaptation and selection. I can summarize the metaphor "education as jazz" as a way of escaping the functional, monological, selective framework of teaching and learning. On this

account, a jazzing philosophy for/with children could be an opportunity to experience childhood as a form of temporality characterized as *exaptational time*.

The eight features--or "doors," or even "bridges"--that I propose in order to unpack the jazz metaphor in educational terms are recognized in the jazz musical tradition, but more basically, they correspond to a jazz way of living life in its different time dimensions. In fact the jazz relation with time is very interesting from an educational point of view, particularly in reference to curriculum design (DICK & CAREY, 2004). The improvisational nature of jazz pushes us to live in the present, in which the tension toward future and past memory seems to collapse in a hopefully generative form of temporality--a time in which creativity takes place as something that dissolves the weight of a subject's age (adult or child) and emerges as *aging humanity*. As the phenomenologist Bernhard Waldenfels (2004, p. 242) put it, "*we are older than ourselves*", that is - as Ingold explained -

behind the selves we are on the point of becoming, but are not yet, are the selves that we already are without our knowing. In this ongoing, itinerant process of becoming who we were, and of having been who we become, there is no bottom line, no point at which we can uncover some basic human nature that was there before it all began. (INGOLD, 2014, p. 137).

This dialectic between past and future that fills the present, transforming it into "existence" with its dynamic meaning, was also wonderfully expressed by F. Scott Fitzgerald (author of the "Tales of the Jazz Age") in the final sentence of *The great Gatsby*: "*So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.*"

The eight features I proposed as doors, or bridges to "philosophy in jazz" could be interpreted as possible replies to the Biesta's critique of learnification of philosophy in education. The first door is *jazzing*, and has to do with children's *jazzing* experience of philosophizing. To say that "jazz is jazzing" seems to be a tautology, but, more deeply understood, it is not. The oxymoron is fruitful in producing the multiplicity of meanings that are attributed to the word, which is related, in its etymology and idiomatic slang significance, to a colourful metaphor for copulation and to seminal fluid. *Jazzing* was not just related to the mechanical action of coitus, but with the enjoyment and pleasure of a shared orgasm (in Latin

co-ire literally means “coming together”) and the promise implied in ejaculation. That’s why jazz and jazzing refer both to intimacy in a solo performance and to the mutual attunement in a jam session. The eroticism of jazz is also recognizable in the musical embodiment that is evident in jazz performances, which are clearly enriched by the psychophysical tensions of musicians toward dialectic oppositions: moment versus duration; difference versus sameness; gratification versus frustration; stability versus stimulation; closeness versus distance (GUSTAVSEN, 2010). When these oppositions are “frozen,” jazzing is in danger; when a dilemma creates flows, the full dynamic potential of jazzing emerges.

It is no coincidence that jazz always triggers a creative process--or better, a *generative* dimension of shared music--making that gives rise to new melodies and sound experiences, shaping something original that shapes the shapers forever. The same embodiment can be recognized in a good philosophical dialogue within a community of children: the eroticism of inquiring emerges also in bodily engagement, in which all the senses are open to grasp meaning in the memory, imagination and (en)countering with other minds. Jazzing philosophy points more to the human potential for creative thinking – predominant in childhood -- than to the demiurgic power of human--made knowledge that dominates adulthood. The generativity of jazzing philosophizing appears more as a manner of being and doing than the production of individual doers. Jazzing means *enlivening*, and jazzing philosophy with children means surrounding the experience of thinking by childhood vitality and animation, and always with enthusiastically shared enjoyment. Jazzing also appears in the slang meaning as a creative messing about, a chaotic ordering, or a harmonic disordering (BARRETT, 2012), which is exactly what transforms the activity of children thinking into philosophical reasoning.

Jazzing is the attitude that seeks to create order in chaos, disorder in harmony, deviation from melody – but never from nothing: jazz emerges when the opportunities offered by the moment are created by the memory of models, which are intentionally challenged through repetition and the infinite alternatives of variation. Repetition and variation – of rhythms, sequences, chains, riffs or



phraseologies - is the main “technique” that generates novelty in jazz, without damaging spontaneity, which is what characterizes the free play of children, and is their proper way to explore the inner and outer world. Generativity in jazz, as in genuine philosophizing, sits exactly between technique and spontaneity (SANTI, 2010), and is always perfectly balanced between art and heart (PILC, 2012). The artistic dimension of jazzing philosophy - or in the “sound of philosophy” as Tartaglia highlighted (2017) - is recognizable in the strong commitment toward repetition, copying and imitation of thinking frames, which sits at the core of jazz, philosophy, and education. Only through repetition of chain of thoughts as notes, can each thinker, as a musician, find her/his own sound in reasoning, as if out of nowhere, contributing to the improvisation of (musical, philosophical, educational) dialogue. I think that this eroticism of jazzing, as a component of philosophizing, would be the better antidote that philosophy for/with children could provide against the risks implied in the capitalization of learning (and learners) denounced by Biesta in his paper.

The second feature/door to philosophy in jazz is fusion. Fusional philosophizing with children is an obvious feature, considering the natural disposition they have to melt down differences and create something surprising. In jazz, fusion refers to blending intercultural styles, genres, moods; multiple educational techniques and settings; alternative theories and practices. But mainly it implies the abandonment of ‘purity’ and the opening up to contamination and promiscuity, leaving the “comfort zone” to live in carnival, the elective topos of heterodoxy in which neologism can be born (see FOLCH--SERRA, 1990, on BAHKTIN): philosophizing for/with children poses that abandonment as the main condition of practice thinking together, as a melding process in which the final product is more than the sum of its parts. Fusional philosophizing - as jazzing -- creates new identities in which the memory of the mixed elements is maintained in the blend, and each one can recognise him/herself. The fusion feature in jazz philosophising is what would preserve children from the risks identified by Biesta of losing subjective identity in the learnification of the world,

and of losing the world in the learnification of subjective existence. Moreover, as Ben-Josef (2006) notes, a pedagogy of fusion would be the preferred educational response to diversity and complexity.

The third feature in jazz philosophy is its *freedom*. Jazz and philosophy share a freedom to the extent to which they are both closely related to inner freedom and proper heterodoxy; both embody the need to break the traditional sound-chains of notes (thoughts) in order to explore new harmonic scales (discourses) and melodic landscapes (frameworks). Philosophy and jazz, as free practices, are strong antidotes to *canonical* instruction and a powerful antibody against *academic* pedagogy (in schools just as in conservatories), in which teaching and learning are reduced to the “pure” reproduction of classic routes and the repetition of standard contents. Of course, being free to transgress fixed rules does not mean being totally free from a framework of regulations and norms, but it does free the system from the risk of becoming dogmatic, bound by fixed aesthetic frameworks and with rigid constraints and criteria for judging predictable results.

The free dimension of jazzing philosophy preserves children from the risk of indoctrination that lies behind every form of standard instruction and standardizing curriculum, which seems to be Biesta’s main worry concerning current educational trends. Considered from a free jazz perspective, the critical thinking components (such as logic) involved in philosophy for/with children curriculum should be considered as means for freedom--tools to release philosophical activity--rather objects of assessment, which close off the practice into standards and mere “skills.”

Free philosophizing, as fusion, calls for experimenting outside the comfort zone of predictable success and exploring other spaces in a “safe creativity environment” (WEINSTEIN, 2016). Jazzing philosophy is always an “outdoor activity.” If Biesta calls for gardening in education (BIESTA, 2017b, p. 419), jazzing philosophy is a form of gardening creative minds. As a gardener, each member of community of inquiry is committed to thinking and agency, which implies caring attitudes in taking responsibility for that thinking and being free to take part in



exploration and experimentation. Philosophizing-as-gardening is open to a real *democracy of play(ing)*, where all instruments have the time and space to express their sounds and voices (and uses), and to decide when to withdraw and leave opportunities to others.

The fourth feature calls for *swing*. Children like swinging, understood as form of primordial play which is not without commitment. The dynamics of coming and going, proper to jazz and philosophical dialogue, are essentially playful and full of fun, recalling the physical evidence of the passing of time, a pendular rhythm and alternation combined with the intentional movement of a body and its force. Swinging is a special experience of embodiment of time, in which mechanical rhythm is transformed into inner movement of emotions (pleasure, but also risk). Swinging as philosophizing is a liberating activity, but it involves the willingness and desire to be freed from the inertia of “dangling,” thus transforming time and a space into excitement and enthusiasm. Swinging transforms “chronos” into “aion” (KOHAN, 2014; 2015), bridging the quantitative and qualitative experience of time into a generative temporality, and giving meaning to each moment, which becomes an event in our history and biography. To live life in this way is to live it philosophically, which reflects Biesta’s interest in the subject and subjectivity in education (BIESTA, 2017, p. 420): in jazz philosophizing the child is swinging in the world, without a fixed position or privileged perspective. The thinker-position is moving... as Lipman told me one cold afternoon in 1991, in his office at Montclair State University.

The fifth feature is the aspiration to *groove*. This is a shared aspiration, a prerogative of community, and community is at the core of the philosophy for/with children experience. Literally, the “groove” is the spiral track cut in a phonograph record for the stylus to follow; it is the *cursus* (cf. *curriculum*) within which and along which all players, instruments, notes, points and counterpoints follow each other and find a flux. *Groove* is a common flow, and *finding the groove* means to find a shared direction, a mutual intention and intension “to be” rather than “to do” and “to have”--a sort of “weak” *intent(s)ionality* which is not

oriented to *retention* (of contents, information, skills, relationships), but which is moved primordially by *attention*. *Attentionality* is what guides the “undergoing action” before/without it becomes a decision in agency (MASSCHELEIN, 2010; INGOLD, 2014). Attentionality makes of the human vulnerable being, disclosed, exposed to others and to possibilities: in a weak position, or better, a non-position that creates the conditions to move and be captured in the groove. This reciprocal at-tention is what brings us into a dialogue or polyphony-- following thinking where it leads and being attracted by where it leads us. This would be, for Lipman, the groove of inquiry in the philosophical community. *Finding the groove* is a positive feeling, which entails listening with emotion, empathy and a caring attitude, and which accompanies the achievement of a common satisfaction without softening the tension of the dialectic. It might represent the best response to Biesta’s concern about the “ego-logical” way of being (BIESTA, 2017:9--10) that dominates education nowadays: being in the groove means to exit egological patterns.

In fact, for me Biesta’s view of philosophy for/with children reveals an underevaluation of the “joint” component of thinking, a component which is not reducible to the communicative nature of thoughts or to reciprocal positions among peers, but which is related to a multitasking activity with a social genesis: listening to what is being said while it is being said. It has to do with what my friend Bjorn Alterhaug told me during a dinner at Padua Jazz Day celebration two years ago: “*not knowing what we are saying before hearing what you are responding*” ... But it is also looking at what is happening and deciding to ensure that it happens not just for me, but for all involved; it is touching and tasting the event with the senses alert, and as an object of others’ senses. Doing philosophy with groove is at the core of active communal inquiry as a form of “jamming”--an expression and condition of what Sawyer (2007) calls “the group genius,” leaving one’s self behind and becoming part of something bigger; what Pilc defines as “a musical wave” (PILC, 2012).



The sixth feature calls for *soul*, and this has a direct relation with the core and conclusion of Biesta's paper (2017b, p. 418), where he asks for a form of education that is able to "touch the soul," putting aside the priority of empowering students in favor of a preference for disarmament. Biesta recognizes in philosophy for/with children a potential in this direction. I would add that a jazz interpretation of the *soul* dimension of philosophizing that might enrich the opportunity this practice offers to children. *Soul* philosophizing expresses the spiritual nature of intimacy in playing together. The *soul* in philosophizing is not a concept or an idea, but rather an insight and intuition which guides all forms of human wisdom not grounded on dogmatism--balancing the joint and solitary dimensions of playing with ideas with a caring disposition towards humanity as community. From this perspective, jazz philosophizing is "in touch" with soul, as it emerges in human beings in communities, world environments, history, and evolution.

The seventh door is *cool*. In the language of landscapes, cool is the atmosphere created by sunrise and sunset, when the shadows are longer and the sounds are lighter. This keeps the experience open to a horizon of possibilities, *Cool jazz* does not mean cold, but rather diminishing, reducing and lessening the "more." Cool philosophizing seeks to spare oneself the effort to quench the thirst for freedom. It is not difficult for children, with their inner and simple courage and hope in the possible. It is more difficult for adults and for adult thinking. Cool thinking implies committing ourselves to rarefying the sound landscape in order to reveal the delicate lines of melodic discourse. In terms of linguistic discourse it means dilating, expanding, widening and stressing chains of reasoning and harmonic theories so as to create space between thoughts and voices, giving them time to converse and more space to think in.

Perhaps a role for the teacher in jazz philosophizing with children--according to the need, identified by Biesta (2017a), to rediscover the role of teaching in education--is to cool the thinking process. It would imply incorporating the rarefied atmosphere into one's own proper agency, suspending

time and a fixed schedule of instructional programming, and to allow and indulge in the luxury of waiting for what is emerging from our shared experience. The *cool teacher* is a light or “weak” presence who is distinguished, not for what she adds to cumulative knowledge in the educational exchange, but for how she is able to relieve it--make room for understanding. *Cooling* assumes a good dose of silence, as teaching assumes a good dose of ignorance, the kind of ignorance already attributed to a good teacher (KOHAN, SANTI, WOZNIAK, 2017) in philosophizing with children.

Finally the last door, but the first feature of jazz itself: *impromptu*. According to previous remarks, we can consider *impromptu* as something unexpected and extemporaneous; as a natural/cultural creative (re)action that remains the basis of evolution, which implies both ad-aptive behavior *in* the environment and ex-aptive action/agency *with* the world. That is why we consider “philosophy as jazz” completely coherent with the “desirable” education hoped for by Biesta (2017b, p. 430). But *impromptu philosophy with children* has other important prerogatives that are worth expanding, starting with *wondering at the world*, which is the beginning of philosophy (and the title of the wonderful manual of *Kio & Gus* in the Lipman and Sharp “Philosophy for Children” curriculum). To improvise we must be open to wonder. Wonder is the condition but also the aim of improvisation: wonder at what is happening in the world as given, and wonder at what we are reaching for by inventing a possible world. If ignorance is a necessary condition for a real teacher, invention is the educator’s main commitment: being open to what is coming into existence. To be open to wonder does not mean simply being able to raise questions--a point that seems to be particularly heartfelt to Biesta, and which strikes at the heart of his issue with philosophy for/with children. In fact, what counts in philosophizing – as in jazzing – is not who raises the better question nor who questions better, or even who is “in question” (BIESTA, 2017b, p. 434), but who is *available* (not just *able*) to be involved and to involve others in wondering. Thus, improvisation, as a fundamental component of



jazz, could become the secret ingredient of a genuine philosophizing, worthy to be offered to the caring imagination of thinking children.

In fact improvisation is as easy to understand as it is difficult to explain, in that it is very similar to playing or philosophizing. It could be viewed as a process--the improvising activity and dynamics; a procedure--the methodical use of variation; or a product--the impromptu that emerges. However we consider it, it is characterized by a paradoxical melding of attitudes, capabilities, techniques, motives, desires and aspirations that pull rather than lead the movement of thinking in a sort of “infinite play” more than in a finite game, such as *Cars* (1987) suggests. Jazz philosophizing implies impromptu, and impromptu is almost a way of life in childhood--a commitment to what is happening in the moment, and curiosity about the surprises hidden in the future, as is proper for one who has a little past (ruins or relics) in front of her. Impromptu has in itself something miraculous, which brings the improviser to admire what emerges from her own action/agency as something that exceeds expectations and insights.

I tried to amuse myself by finding an acronym that contains the main elements of improvisation and am delighted that it came out as CHRIST:

C for creativity, curiosity, courage, and care;

H for hope, happiness, honesty, and help;

R for risk, rules, resilience, and reciprocity;

I for inquiry, imagination, invention, and involvement;

S for spontaneity, surprise, suspense, and sensitivity;

T for technique, trust, tension, and transgression.

Of course this acronym could be enriched with many other words as components of improvisation, translated into many other languages, or completely changed in another one. In fact I propose it just to exercise the memory of words and their potential for “doing things in the world” (Austin, 1962) and giving meaning to our experience. But finally, what we have to take into account in trying to capture something as evanescent as improvisation is that it has always to do with special relationships to:

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Time/tense: living in the moment (... not on time);

World: staying in the middle (... not in the center);

Others: being contemporary oneself and with the other (... not anybody);

Works: renouncing the ownership of ideas/products (no authorship) and avoiding quoting oneself (no repetition);

Truth: choosing imperfection (as aesthetics) and uncertainty (as ontology) in order to still be inspired and to aspire in spite of everything.

I am not sure that these jazz notes will be useful in provoking or enriching the discussion opened in this space in the echo of Biesta's voice. I hope, however, that these reflections will inspire other thoughts, or rupture other chains of reasons to re-mark the opportunity of doing philosophy with children as a new "poor pedagogy" (MASSCHELEIN, 2010) for our rich era, which is still looking for the missed childhood of human thinking.

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received in: 18.08.2017

accepted in: 28.08.2017