

the philosophy of liberation for/with children: in search of liberation and the creation of an ageless *pueblo*

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abstract

From its origins, the philosophy of liberation has had both a critical and a creative aspect. The first seeks to critically examine domination, dependency, and the permanent effects of colonization. The second aims to create and re-create the liberation of peoples, developing and reconstituting ways of existing, imagining, thinking, and philosophizing that surpass colonial ways of existing, imagining, thinking, and philosophizing. Thus, for the philosophy of liberation, the liberation of peoples is distinguished from the notions of emancipation and freedom that hide reality under processes of ideologization. An example of the latter is modernity's notion of emancipation. In this paper, I propose to approach the critical and creative function of the philosophy of liberation from a childist lens in which not only the voices of children are considered, but also the adultist and modern vision of emancipation is overcome. This will be particularly important to continue the legacy of the philosophy of liberation, and its mission to criticize and create from the political and philosophical participation of the victims in the processes of ideologization. From this legacy the children are participants, who, by engaging in pedagogical practices of liberation, act as *un pueblo*, a collective political actor without age.

keywords: philosophy of liberation; childism; philosophy for/with children; liberation; *pueblo*.

la filosofía de la liberación para/con los niños: en busca de la liberación y la creación de un *pueblo sin edad*

resumen

Desde sus orígenes, la filosofía de la liberación ha tenido una faceta crítica y otra creativa. La primera busca examinar críticamente la dominación, la dependencia y los efectos permanentes de la colonización. La segunda busca crear y recrear la liberación de los pueblos, desarrollando y reconstituyendo formas de existir, imaginar, pensar y filosofar que superen las formas coloniales de existir, imaginar, pensar y filosofar. Así, para la filosofía de la liberación, la liberación de los pueblos se distingue de las nociones de emancipación y libertad que ocultan la realidad bajo procesos de ideologización. Un ejemplo de esto último es la noción de emancipación de la modernidad. En este trabajo, propongo abordar la función crítica y creativa de la filosofía de la liberación desde una óptica infantilista en la que no sólo se consideren las voces de los niños, sino que también se supere la visión adultista y moderna de la emancipación. Esto será particularmente importante para continuar el legado de la filosofía de la liberación, y su misión de criticar y crear desde la participación política y filosófica de las

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víctimas de los procesos de ideologización. De este legado son partícipes los niños, quienes, al involucrarse en prácticas pedagógicas de liberación, actúan como *un pueblo*, un actor político colectivo sin edad.

palabras clave: filosofía de la liberación; infantilismo; filosofía para/con niños; liberación; *pueblo*.

a filosofia da libertação para/com crianças: em busca da libertação e a criação de um *povo* sem idade

resumo

Desde sua origem, a filosofia da libertação tem tido um aspecto tanto crítico quanto criativo. O primeiro busca examinar criticamente a dominação, a dependência e os efeitos permanentes da colonização. O segundo busca criar e recriar a libertação dos povos, desenvolvendo e reconstituindo modos de existir, imaginar, pensar e filosofar que superem os modos coloniais de existir, imaginar, pensar e filosofar. Logo, para a filosofia da libertação, a libertação dos povos se distingue das noções de emancipação e liberdade que escondem a realidade sob processos de ideologização. Um exemplo desse último é a noção moderna de emancipação. Neste trabalho, proponho abordar a função crítica e criativa da filosofia da libertação a partir de uma ótica infantilista, que não só considere as vozes das crianças, mas que também supere a visão moderna e adultista de emancipação. Isso será particularmente importante para continuar o legado da filosofia da libertação e sua missão de criticar e criar a partir da participação política e filosófica das vítimas dos processos de ideologização. Desse legado fazem parte as crianças, que, ao se envolverem em práticas pedagógicas de libertação, atuam como um *povo*, um ator político coletivo sem idade.

palavras-chave: filosofia da libertação; infantilismo; filosofia para/com crianças; libertação; *povo*.



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introduction

In the present article I will examine the intersection of philosophy of liberation, philosophy for children (P4C), and childism, an intersection yet to be explored. The main objective will be to present some of the key components of philosophy of liberation, childism, and P4C, so that in their dialogue a theoretical basis for future discussions and research focusing on childism and liberation theories in design could be invented and, in turn, advance the understanding of these theories. The contribution of the article will lie in the invention of new dialogues, allowing us to understand philosophy as a process of critique and creation. In the interaction between childism, philosophy of liberation, and P4C, it will be possible to introduce a Latin American perspective, which since its origins has ceaselessly sought to answer the question of whether it is possible to invent an authentic philosophy of the Americas. Although in this article the invention will not consist in creating from scratch, but in creatively dialoguing concepts such as ideologization, emancipation, liberation, and *pueblo*, from the perspectives of the philosophy of liberation, childism, and P4C. This introductory dialogue can be considered as invention.

As stated by Simón Rodríguez (2004), “Where shall we go to look for models? Spanish America is original. Original must be its institutions and its government. And original are the means of founding one or the other. Either we invent or we err” (p. ix). This statement echoes the incessant search of Latin American thinkers who sought to create an autochthonous Latin American philosophy. As Beorlegui (2010) explains, since the precursors of the philosophy of liberation, authors such as Leopoldo Zea and Augusto Salazar Bondy strove to develop an autochthonous philosophy emerging from the Americas, not imitating European philosophy, because this would mean not having created an original philosophy. Echoing this search for one's own identity, Rodríguez (2004) states that we must invent or err.

The philosophy of liberation arises in a specific historical moment “as a result of the awareness of a situation of oppression of LA [Latin America], propitiated by a dependent capitalism, and unmasked by the so-called ‘theory of dependence’” (Beorlegui, 2010, p. 672). Hence, the philosophy of liberation should be understood from its two main aspects: the critical and the creative. This philosophy, on the one hand, criticizes dependence, coloniality, and *el ocultamiento* (the concealment) of the inhabitants of Latin America and, on the other hand, creates its own philosophy, which responds to the reality of its context.

Hence Ellacuría (1985), one of the most important thinkers of the philosophy and theology of liberation, affirms that Latin American philosophy must have a critical and creative aspect. On the one hand, “the critical aspect is made possible by an ethical attitude of protest against the nothingness that is present in the deficient reality, especially in the unjust and oppressive” (Ellacuría, 1985, p. 63). On the other hand, “the creative aspect is possible as overcoming nothingness from the ideally apprehended reality as a negation of what is ‘privatively’ nothingness and following a praxis that in some of its moments advances in the negation of certain aspects of historical reality” (Ellacuría, 1985, p. 63). In other words, the critical aspect unveils and protests the ideologized character of a given discourse, while the creative aspect manages to create a new theoretical discourse that unveils reality and makes it possible to demonstrate both its negative and positive aspects (Ellacuría, 1985).

Regarding the connection between this legacy of thinkers who thought of a Latin American philosophy of liberation and the P4C project, Kohan (2015) recalls that “Latin America was one of the first regions to receive philosophy for children” (p. 151). And although the same methods and meanings of Matthew Lipman's program have been applied, the sociocultural and historical meanings that are part of Latin America need to be taken into account, examined, and recreated in doing philosophy with children.

That is why Kohan (2015) affirms, referring to the P4C program in Latin America, that “It is necessary to invent because imitating may mean reproducing the structure of subjugation and extermination that has been prevailing for centuries in



Latin America” (p. 152). O’Gorman (1995) already stated that America (i.e., the Americas) is known as the “New World” which should be like the “Old World,” particularly like Europe, the most “accomplished” and “perfect” of continents. Therefore, the invention of America arose because of a hermeneutic at the service of Europe and an ontological structure that considered America as the corporeal reality that should imitate Europe to develop its spiritual reality (O’Gorman, 1995).

In this context, it is essential that the philosophy produced in the Americas continues to criticize and create, not imitate and err. In this paper, I reflect on how the critical and creative aspects of philosophy could be recreated from the practice of philosophy with children, childism, and philosophy of liberation. In analysing these aspects, I will seek to identify and explain how the exercise of liberation that can occur in philosophizing with children should be understood as a political commitment that takes shape in the notion of the concept of *el pueblo* (the people). The concept of *pueblo*, although present in the philosophy and politics of liberation, is a concept that still needs to be further developed. So, in this article I will develop it to include a childist vision. Liberation, moreover, must be understood from a childist perspective, in which children are recognized as excluded from an adultist system, critical of it, and creators of better possibilities. From this theoretical perspective, childism and the philosophy of liberation can provide new pedagogical tools for the practice of the philosophy of liberation for/with children. The result will be that the traditions of thought of Latin American philosophy will offer new perspectives and dynamics to the debate on childism, such as the political participation of children under an ageless *pueblo*.

To support the above assertions, this paper is separated into four main sections: 1. Ideologization & the Critical and Creative Function of the Philosophy of Liberation, where I introduce adultism as a form of ideologization and coloniality; 2. Modernity’s Notion of Emancipation & the Criticism of Adultism, in which I make a childist critique of the notion of emancipation; 3. Childism and Freire: Towards a Search for Liberation, where I present Freire’s (2005) proposal as an intersection between childism and the philosophy of liberation; and 4. The Philosophy of Liberation for/with Children as

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Participation in *el Pueblo*, where I develop the concept of *pueblo* to intentionally present the role of children in the new conception of ageless *pueblo*.

ideologization & the critical and creative function of the philosophy of liberation

As Ellacuría (1985) states, “The critical function of philosophy is largely defined by the phenomenon of ideology” (p. 47). For him, ideology is an ambiguous phenomenon because it can be defined as neutral ideology, negative ideology, or positive ideology. Neutral ideology is the intellectual basis of the human being that allows theorizing, seeking explanations, and justifications that give way to the understanding of reality. As Ellacuría (2013) explains, “people would not turn to ideology, including its negative aspects, if it did not serve a useful and even necessary purpose” (p. 97). Indeed, neutral ideology appeals to the human and historical need to seek explanations and make sense of reality.

On the other hand, positive ideology consists of “a coherent, comprehensive, and evaluative explanation through concepts, symbols, images, references, etc.” (Ellacuría, 2013, p. 98). These explanations give ideology a positive character since it serves as a theoretical tool to demonstrate truth and goodness and criticize their appearance. In this exercise it is possible to go beyond simple fragmented observation, to understand reality in a critical and broader sense. The fundamental intention is to identify unexpected aspects of reality, while at the same time creating a new theoretical discourse that more accurately explains reality as such (Ellacuría, 2013).

Finally, negative ideology has the function of concealing and distorting reality (Ellacuría, 2013). This consists of a set of beliefs and ideas that are held personally, and as such hide and deform reality with the appearance of truth. However, this type of ideology is dangerous, since it can impose the appearance of truth, as if it were the truth itself. In this exercise, negative ideology ceases to be ideology and becomes “ideologization,” which consists of a “simple, premeditated deception, a social and not purely individual phenomenon, which attempts to persuade public opinion that something is true and just, which is really false and unjust” (Ellacuría, 2013, p. 99). That



is to say, ideologization has an individual character, but above all a collective and social one. It is harmful because it is based on the pretension of being universal, necessary, and even good, socializing people to believe, act, and be, consciously and unconsciously, perpetrators of injustices and social, political, religious, and even philosophical falsehoods.

For Ellacuría (2013), philosophy has a liberating function of ideologization. This is found in becoming conscious of ideologization by means of theories that explain 1) human intelligence and human knowledge; 2) reality as such; 3) the human being, society, and history; 4) the proper evaluation of human beings and their world; and 5) the ultimate and transcendent. This whole theoretical process is neither ahistorical nor merely abstract. Otherwise, it would not be the basis for a philosophy of liberation. Rather, this theory goes hand in hand with the need for a praxis of liberation that must accompany people who wish to free themselves from the material effects of ideologization and is even nourished by it. In other words, the theoretical aspect of philosophy of liberation must collaborate with the practical and political aspect of the praxis of liberation.

One of the processes of ideologization is adultism, which is usually linked to racism and colonialism (Biswas et al., 2023). By adultism, here I refer to the dominance of adults and their views in social understanding and practices. As Wall (2022) states “Social understandings and practices have historically been dominated by adults and adult points of view, leaving the entire edifice of human societies, cultures, language, rights, law, relationships, narratives, and norms built upon a powerful bedrock of adultism” (p. 260).

For the exercise of liberation, the critical analysis of adultism is imperative, as it is part of modernity, colonialism, the modern world-system, and capitalism – and all these aspects of the same simultaneous and mutually constitutive reality (Dussel, 2016), including the intersection of class, gender, and sexuality (Lugones, 2008). All these aspects, acting in a complex and interdependent manner, operate in coloniality (Quijano, 2000), that is, the intertwined and interdependent system of networks that

shapes the economic, political, and social structures and the way of understanding nature and natural resources, gender and sexuality, subjectivity, and knowledge (Mignolo, 2010). Coloniality is not the transitory operation of colonialism, but its remnants and effects that, without ceasing to be colonialism, operates constitutively in the creation of modern world-systems, capitalism, patriarchy, etc., and does not allow us to think of a different world. In other words, while colonialism consists of domination, exploitation, or control of one group or people over another or people in a transitory manner, coloniality remains, because it has created the new and normalized violent norm in how to understand and act on reality.

modernity's notion of emancipation & the criticism of adultism

As a constitutive aspect of modernity, adultism perpetuates modernity's notion of emancipation. Therefore, analysing and exploring modernity's notion of emancipation is particularly fundamental to distinguish it from a childist liberation process that does not have the characteristics of colonialism, imperialism, violence, and domination that prevail in modernity's notion of emancipation.

Allen (2015) explains that the notion of emancipation that is predominant in feminist critical theory is based on two interrelated features of modernity: the liberal conception of negative freedom and the progressive reading of history. Using as reference the work of Lila Abu-Lughod and Saba Mahmood, Allen explains that, on one hand, the liberal conception of negative freedom relies on language that promotes emancipation as escaping violence and oppression. This type of emancipation is predominantly seen in discourses on gendered Orientalism, in which women's need to escape any Islamic society is highlighted (Allen, 2015). Without engaging in processes of self-criticism, this liberal conception of negative freedom ends up perpetuating neoconservative agendas that justify Western imperial intervention in Arab countries, for example. This agenda, already at work in systems of colonial domination, is justified under pretexts of emancipation and preservation of the freedom of some that perpetuate violence and oppression of other communities, peoples, and nations.



On the other hand, in an interrelated way, the progressive reading of history proposes that the conceptions of freedom, autonomy, and emancipation that constitute the core of European modernity are the endpoint of a process of learning and historical development (Allen, 2015). Western feminism has learned from this process and development; hence it has assumed the learning process model as an expansion or extension of the idea of freedom as autonomy that emerges in the European Enlightenment (Allen, 2015). Thus, modernity's notion of emancipation asserts a cognitive and normative superiority of the values of modernity over "traditional" or "pre modern" ways of life (Allen, 2015).

Both interrelated characteristics of modernity's notion of emancipation represent emancipation as violence. On the one hand, the liberal conception of negative freedom and the progressive reading of history can be presented as justification of Eurocentric colonial domination and, on the other, as the culmination of a learning process that other cultures must assume as universally valid.

The violence that arises from this "universal validity" is that, if it is universally valid, it must be universally accepted. Hence, everyone, including children, is affected by the notion of emancipation of modernity. As Biswas et al. (2023) assert, adultism also operates within modern concepts of ontological autonomy, political independence, and the field of postmodernity. Hence, these concepts of modernity address all kinds of experiential differences with little mention of children or age (Biswas et al., 2023).

Given this scenario, Wall (2022) proposes that social structures be understood as "expressions of historically hegemonic discourses that depend for their power and meaning on relegating experiences of difference or otherness to societies' invisible margins" (Wall, 2022, pp. 264-265). In this case, emancipation is based on hegemonic discourses, which do not pretend to understand all cultures as equal, nor their worldviews as valid. Much less do children, as affected by these processes of ideologization, are taken into consideration.

childism and freire: towards a search for liberation

One of the theories that seeks to intentionally address the voices, experiences, and existence of children within processes of domination and hegemony is childism. As Wall (2022) explains, “Childism is meant here in analogy to concepts such as feminism, womanism, postgenderism, postcolonialism, decolonialism, environmentalism, and transhumanism” (p. 257). As far as this article is concerned, childism is considered analogous to philosophy of liberation, since it maintains similarities with the goals of creation and critique that characterizes philosophy of liberation. For example, childism seeks to critically examine domination, dependency, and the permanent effects of adultism. Furthermore, childism seeks to create and recreate the liberation of children – though not only children – by developing and reconstituting ways of existing, imagining, thinking, and philosophizing that overcome adultist ways of existing, imagining, thinking, and philosophizing. The big difference with the philosophy of liberation is that childism has as its main focus people under 18 years of age, while philosophy of liberation has as its main focus the poorest people.

Childism also attempts to overcome the child-adult dichotomy, with the purpose of emphasizing the mutual dependence between people of different generations as fundamental to human existence (Biswas et al., 2023). Indeed, Kohan (2011) ventures to affirm that childhood is a constant and endless state of human life. In this case “childhood is something that inherently constitutes human life, and therefore could never be abandoned, forgotten or overcome” (Kohan, 2011, p. 343). Therefore, as a constitutive part of human life, childhood overcomes the chronological aspects of becoming and progress, representing a space of resistance and creativity where it is possible to experience a world different and distinct from adulthood.

As Rollo (2020) argues, “The idea of the child is often posed as the obverse of the autonomous, rational, adult subject, or citizen, what is sometimes conceptualized as an Other” (p. 207). For example, in the field of education, the child is an Other when a banking education is practiced (Freire, 2005). By banking education, Freire (2005) refers



to an education where the teacher and the student have opposite functions. While the teacher teaches, knows, thinks, speaks, disciplines, chooses, acts, practices its authority, and is a Subject, the students are taught, know nothing, are lectured, listen, are disciplined, comply, repeat, adapt, do not practice their freedom, and are mere objects (Freire, 2005). In this case, the adult is the Self, and the child is the Other, necessary for the Self to be useful and exercise their power.

Although Freire (2005) is not considered academically as a “Latin American childist,” his role in favouring students and educators to be collaborators in liberation processes is central to the advancement of the understanding of childism in Latin America. Indeed, Freire is central to the philosophy of liberation movement. In his critical role, he emphasizes that banking education collaborates in the process of ideologization. For him banking education “attempts, by mythicizing reality, to conceal certain facts which explain the way human beings exist in the world” (Freire, 2005, p. 83). In this case, the process of mythicizing reality attempts to domesticate the consciousness of students, isolating them from the world, denying them their ontological and historical vocation to become more fully human (Freire, 2005). Based on the need to confront and deny the oppression exercised by banking education, Freire’s (2005) proposal to seek a problem-posing education arises.

This education consists of a pedagogical tool of liberation that breaks with the teacher-student dichotomy. In the words of Freire (2005), “In problem-posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation” (p. 83). Problem-posing education, therefore, has a critical function in that the person can “become conscious of his or her own perception of that reality, and deal critically with it” (Freire, 2005, p. 32). In other words, the person can practice self-affirmation while being aware that they are a Subject.

Problem-posing education “enables teachers and students to become Subjects of the educational process by overcoming authoritarianism and an alienating

intellectualism; it also enables people to overcome their false perception of reality” (Freire, 2005, p. 86). In this way, the teacher ceases to be the Subject and the student the object, so that both can learn from each other, breaking barriers of authoritarianism, alienation, and vertical power fetishism.

Freire (2005), with his critique of banking education and the creation of problem-posing education, collaborates with the objective of childism where he recognizes that children are active people who are constantly creating. Furthermore, with problem-posing education, teachers and students create and learn from each other. Freire (2005) offers teachers the tools to cultivate an education that allows students to become questioners of reality. With this constant questioning, it is possible to overcome the ideologization of banking education.

Along with this critical aspect, the creative aspect of problem-posing education lies in its dialogic, relational act, which is based on love, humility, and faith. Love, because love is an act of courage, of commitment to others (Freire, 2005). Humility, because the exercise of creating and recreating a better world is not possible if there is the arrogance of a vertical hierarchy or of an “I/we” that denies the participation of “others/them” (Freire, 2005). Faith, because it believes in the power of human beings to create and recreate and in the vocation of all human beings to become more human (Freire, 2005).

Problem-posing education, as an educational tool of liberation, remains in line with the idea of a non-chronological childhood, constitutive of human life. As Kohan (2020) states, although in his life and work Freire was not particularly devoted to the education of children, he was dedicated to the education of an ageless *pueblo* (people). This ageless *pueblo* maintains an affirmative vision of childhood as it constitutes “a desire, a taste, a sensibility for the forces of life, such as curiosity, dream and transformation” (Kohan, 2020, p. 304). This desire, taste, sensibility, curiosity, dream, and transformation of childhood allows the revolution which is necessary to change, create, and recreate the state of things and the dominant ways of life. In this way, revolution can be “the most joyful, playful and inquisitive of all things” (Kohan, 2020,



p. 305). And the revolution of the *pueblo* can be that of an ageless political actor. P4C, in collaboration with philosophy of liberation and childism, could be helpful in this exercise.

the philosophy of liberation for/with children as participation in *el pueblo*

The novelty of the P4C movement is that it invites children to philosophize. In the very act of philosophizing with children and allowing them to philosophize among themselves, we could find a relationship with childism because children are recognized as both critical and creative actors. In the very act of inviting children to philosophize, the role of the educator and the student is brought into play, since it is not understood that the educator is the bearer of knowledge, and the child is the recipient. On the contrary, according to Lipman (1988), the co-founder of P4C, the goal of bringing philosophy to school is not that children learn philosophy, but that they learn to think philosophically. This requires that educators have some training in teaching logic and critical reasoning, and the tools to practice it with children.

Some of the pedagogical and curricular tools that teachers can use to stimulate children's philosophical participation include the use of philosophical novels (e.g., *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery*, *Lisa*, *Suki*, etc.), images, videos, short stories, photographs, etc. Once the stimulus is shared with the children, they express their questions, curiosities, and comments to the community of inquiry. For Lipman (1988), the community of inquiry is "where students and teachers can talk together as persons and as members of the same community, where they can read together, appropriate ideas together, build on one another's ideas as well as think independently, seek reasons for their views, explore their presuppositions" (p. 42). The main goal is that members of the community of inquiry can "bring into their lives a fresh new sense of what it is to discover, to invent, to interpret, and to criticize" (Lipman, 1988, p. 42).

Lipman, Sharp, and Oscanyan (1980) explain that in the community of inquiry, educators should 1) assure that proper procedures are being followed, 2) be open to the variety of views implicit among the students, 3) urge students to look for their

rationale and implications, and 4) refrain from manipulating or aborting children's thinking before they have had a chance to see where their own ideas may lead them. That is, children should be able to ask questions freely and dialogue with their peers about their questions and arguments, while educators have the responsibility to ensure that their students have the appropriate means to present questions and arguments in an orderly, respectful, and appropriate manner.

According to Sharp (2004), another co-founder of P4C, communities of inquiry are an educational and philosophical practice in which children "are in the process of becoming persons who think for themselves and thus, in a very important sense they are free. They are prepared to reappraise their deepest values and commitments, and hence their own identity" (p. 178). It is in feeling free to analyse, explore, and recreate philosophical concepts that children can use communities of inquiry as a practice of liberation. In the words of De la Garza (2018),

If Philosophy for Children can provide this space for young people to feel free to be themselves, perhaps then they will be able to work toward the construction of a society that is free of the uncritical acceptance of traditional roles that have oppressed so many in the past. (p. 140)

In the spirit of practicing liberation with children, I claim elsewhere that P4C and philosophy of liberation "fit together very well if the former has an understanding of the colonality of power and knowledge and the intentionality of contributing to the process of decolonization" (Padilla Rosas, 2023a, p. 24). That is, P4C, in collaboration with philosophy of liberation, can critique the system of intertwined and interdependent networks of colonality, while at the same time creating and re-creating, together with children, ways of existing, thinking, and philosophizing that overcome oppressive ones. From this arises the philosophy of liberation for/with children. In it, the exercise of philosophizing is in a better position to give preferential options to children to overcome the harmful effects of colonality, ideologization, and adultism through collaborative and intergenerational philosophical practices.

As Funston (2017) states, philosophical dialogues, although arising within dynamics of adultistic authority, have ideal goals that seek to overcome this type of



authority. He states that “It is unlikely that a dialogue will reach the point where everyone is completely equal; the dialogue exists within a society where adults have authority over children and where people are treated differently based on race, gender, and class” (Funston, 2017, p. 12). Hence, he proposes that P4C makes use of critical pedagogy whereby teachers “should model the kind of thinking the dialogue aims at, that is, retaining the mindset of love, faith, humility, trust, and critical thinking that Freire stressed” (Funston, 2017, p. 13). On this type of dialogue and pedagogical exercise is based what Funston (2017) calls “critical P4C” which “offers strategies for engaging students in discussions relevant to social issues and breaks the boundaries between ‘school life’ and the students’ everyday life outside the classroom” (p. 4). In this way, philosophical practice with children could be translated into what Freire (2005) calls *conscientização* (critical consciousness), which consists in a level of subjective perception of the current situation, in which the person, through action, prepares “for the struggle against the obstacles to their humanization” (p. 119). This is where children can develop a critical awareness of their reality and be motivated to act.

Like critical P4C, the philosophy of liberation for/with children is based on the translation of critical thinking into critical consciousness. This emphasis is particularly important if one takes into consideration that the “critical consciousness” present in Freire (2005), involves a political commitment, which did not seem to be of as much interest to Lipman (1988) as was the development of critical thinking (Sofiste, 2010; Kohan, 2018). Therefore, there is a need to unite critical thinking and political engagement within the processes of liberation that can emerge in the philosophical dialogues of communities of inquiry.

It is in this connection of political commitment with philosophical exercise, where theory and praxis collaborate to develop processes of liberation in which children can examine, create, and recreate liberation. It is in this union where children can cultivate, together with their teachers and other adults, their capacity to be part of activist processes (Padilla Rosas, 2023b). Moreover, in this way, children can recognize themselves as participants of the ageless *pueblo*.

el pueblo

Dussel's concept of *pueblo* is a central concept for philosophy of liberation but one that requires further theorization. As far as this paper is concerned, I will focus on understanding it from a childist lens, which although Dussel never worked with, can be understood as a movement analogous to the philosophy of liberation.

By *pueblo* here I refer to the concept of "*pueblo*" developed by Dussel (2008). According to him,

The Aztec term *altepetl* and the Mayan term *Amaq'* refer to the "community" or the *pueblo*, and even vividly to the "we" that has been forgotten by modern, Western experience. As a result, in Latin America – through the indigenous influence that permeates the continent – the word *pueblo* means something more profound than merely "the people" in romance languages. (p. 74)

Thus, the concept of *pueblo* is based on indigenous notions of a "we" that is radically different from an ontological vision of the "I" of the West. This is because, according to Dussel (1985), "That ontology did not come from nowhere. It arose from a previous experience of domination over other persons, of cultural oppression over other worlds" (p. 3). Hence, he states that "Before the *ego cogito* there is an *ego conquiro*; 'I conquer' is the practical foundation of 'I think'" (Dussel, 1985, p. 3).

In this sense, the ontology of the geopolitical centre of Europe is in turn ideological. In Dussel's (1985) words, "Ontology, the thinking that expresses Being – the Being of the reigning and central system – is the ideology of ideologies, the foundation of the ideologies of the empires, of the center" (p. 5). Hence the "I," or in this case the "Being," is at the centre, and the "non-being" is at the periphery. Europe "is," the peripheries of Europe are the "non-being." It is in this way that ontology, like ideologization, is oppressive: Both present a set of beliefs designed to support an unjust status quo (Silva, 2019).

In a distinct way, the "we" of Dussel's (2008) concept of *pueblo* describes the importance and the sense of unity in indigenous communities throughout Latin America. For example, in the Aztecs and Mayan socio-political reality, the community is part of the lifestyle and even the language. As Tzul Tzul (2018) explains, the



communal governance system the K'iche' practices, is based in assemblies organized by and for the community, where women and men reach consensus concerning daily affairs and the distribution of caring for the land. In these communities, defending the land is linked to defending all the means that allow the survival of the community. This includes

water, roads, forests, cemeteries, schools, sacred places, rituals; in short, the concrete and symbolic wealth that communities produce and govern through a series of strategies guided from a specific space and time that are structured from each unit of reproduction. (Tzul Tzul, 2018, p. 386).

In this sense of community and defence of life as a means of communal survival, the community demonstrates its power in service: *k'ax k'ol* (Tzul Tzul, 2018). *K'ax k'ol* denotes work or service (*k'ol*) as something that is painful (*k'ax*) but practiced in community. In fact, men, women, and children are committed with the *k'ax k'ol* as it is part of everyday life for the K'iche' and necessary for the sustainability and reproduction of life in all its dimensions within and outside the community.

This sense of communal "we," points to Dussel's (2008) notion of *pueblo*, where all members depend on each other to survive and practice liberation. This is not to say that somehow in Latin America children are not traditionally marginalized. Rather, the power of *el pueblo* is the collaboration among its members, the collective action, in which children can or are also participants, depending on the community or indigenous nation. Thus, the indigenous notion of "we" builds and rebuilds the political base on which *el pueblo* is founded. Moreover, given that the indigenous socio-political system places the community at the centre of its organization, for Dussel (2008), *el pueblo* must manifest their continuous desire to live and participate in joint action.

According to Dussel (2008), it is this desire (*potentia*) to survive or exist as a community that is the foundation of politics. *Potentia* as power is the first manifestation of the capacity or potentiality that the community possesses to govern and practice its emancipation from the systems that exclude, dominate, and oppress. In this way, *el pueblo* as a communality represents the *potentia* to exercise political liberation.

Dussel (2008), like Freire (2005), believes in the capacity of *el pueblo* to exercise their liberation. Hence, Dussel (2008) makes use of the concept *potentia* “to refer to the power that is a faculty or capacity inherent in the people as the final instance of sovereignty, authority, governability, and the political” (p. 17). In this manner, *potentia* is the potential of a community, sector, social bloc, and each group to become a political actor.

Once that *potentia* is put into action through communal consensus, where all members organize themselves to demand their needs, that capacity becomes *potestas*. In Dussel’s (2008) words, “If *potentia* is power in-itself, then *potestas* is power outside-itself” (p. 19). Furthermore, Dussel (2008) states that “The process of passing from a fundamental moment (*potentia*) to its constitution as an organized power (*potestas*) begins when the political community affirms itself as an instituting power [...], thereby deciding to heterogeneously organize its functions in order to accomplish diverse ends” (p. 19). In this sense, *el pueblo* is power, and it can exercise its power when it is organized to practice its political capacity in consensus, from a non-exclusive “we.”

For the purposes of this article, *el pueblo* represents an opportunity to understand the intersection between childism and P4C from a Latin American lens. Throughout the communities of inquiry, I argue that children are in a favourable position to put into practice their ability to translate their *potentia* into *potestas*. Communal philosophical reflections can awaken in them their desire to practice activism or political exercise with their community. In that process both teachers (adults) and students (children) can learn from each other. It is in this learning and unlearning that love, humility, and faith allows for a political commitment of *conscientização*. To practice this critical consciousness, it is necessary to be *un pueblo* working together to live liberation together with others. Finally, it is necessary to act together, as a body with different members working for a common goal. Thus, *el pueblo* acts as a collective political actor, acting at critical political conjunctures, reaching explicit consciousness of the demands to be prioritized, and “constructing history on the basis of a new foundation” (Dussel, 2008, p. 75), “from below.”



The intersection of philosophy of liberation, P4C, and childism that I briefly present in this article aims to stimulate the new foundation, in which children are part of the people in an explicit way. Making explicit the participation of children in social movements and in the field of philosophizing is a subject that could advance the understanding of the concept of *pueblo* and the Latin American invention that Rodríguez (2004) proposed. Acting as a collective political actor, children are invited to imagine and recreate philosophies in intergenerational collaboration. Children are invited to analyse, explore, and re-create notions of liberation that are not static, selfish, or haughty, but dynamic, supportive, and humble. It is in this participation that the creative aspect of philosophy materializes in new ways of philosophizing and acting politically in which liberation is expressed in a childist way as a desire, a taste, and a sensibility for all life. It is in this participation that the critical aspect of philosophy unveils and protests against the ideologized character of adultism, prioritizing the curiosity, the dream, and the transformation that comes "from below."

final remarks

Inventing, as proposed by Rodríguez (2004), is in the background of the understanding of the ageless *pueblo*. Children, members of *el pueblo*, will not operate as invented products of adults, but as inventors, collaborating in the effort of liberation. The "we" that permeates the concept *pueblo* must overcome any domination that the "I" wants to make of the "other." As Tzvetan Todorov (1984) states, the conquest of the Americas supposes "the discovery *self* makes of the *other*" (p. 3). That is to say, the history of the conquest of the Americas becomes a discovery because it emanates from the perspective of the writer; under the interpretation of the "discoverer" to the "discovered." However, Dussel (1993) catalogues the conquest of the Americas as *el encubrimiento* (the concealment) of the Other, where the European "ego" concealed the already inhabitants of the stolen lands. In that sense, the Americas, since 1492, were invented from the European imaginary. That is why the invitation of Simón Rodríguez (2004) is pertinent: either we invent, or we err.

The invention of the ageless *pueblo* must be endless, constant, in search of a liberation *que está ahí pero todavía no* (that is there but not yet). This is because, as Dussel (1973) states, the human being is *intotalizado* (never complete) (p. 47). The ageless *pueblo* will be able to create its own understanding of childism, philosophy of liberation, and P4C. With its basis in the "we," the ageless *pueblo* seeks to overcome individualistic and rights-based visions invented by laws that do not take into consideration the power of *el pueblo* for their liberation. That is, above any right or legality, there is the ageless *pueblo* that operates as a political actor that is not satisfied but seeks in the *potestas* always the welfare of the community and its members.

In the present article, through the interaction between childism, philosophy of liberation, and P4C, I set out to introduce the perspective of Latin American intellectual thought, thought that still has much to offer in the fields of childism and P4C. The proposal of ageless *pueblo* seeks both to develop the understanding of the concept *pueblo* and to join the childist critique of notions of emancipation and freedom that end up being violence and oppression for others, the children, the Other of an adultist system. Furthermore, the concept of ageless *pueblo* embraces the dialogue between childism, philosophy of liberation, and P4C, which includes a practice of liberation where the adult-child dichotomy is overcome by a political and philosophical commitment to *conscientização*. Finally, it joins through communities of inquiry where children can transition from *potentia* to *potestas* in a liberating praxis arising from collaborative, loving, humble, and faithful dialogue. This is the fundamental basis of the critical and creative aspects of a philosophy of liberation for/with children.

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