cover: picasso, *las meninas* (1957)

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article

re-claiming childhood:

embracing alternative time dimensions through philosophy for children

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abstract

This proposal was born from an experience in a high school and highlights the generative influences of Philosophy for Children (P4C) on young adults. I first discuss and provide examples of how the school system traditionally does not value learning and thinking philosophically by flattening the process to the pre-packaged dispensation of ready-made answers. Such ways of learning, also known as the "banking" model of education, devalues children's ways of knowing and being in the world. This pedagogical stance, among other problems, results in a focus on the quantitative-chronological dimension of time, leaving little to no room for the importance of the present moment that belongs to and is natural to most childhood experiences. The central part of the paper is an attempt to better explain, through concepts derived from anthropology and pedagogy, what this alternative time dimension consists of and what possibilities it unlocks within educational environments. In the final section, I argue that joining a community of inquiry like Philosophy for Children

as a young adult poses greater complexity as breaking away from ingrained certainties becomes more intricate. Still, it also involves the opportunity to enter a metaphorical time machine that brings one back to reclaim the time of childhood. This metaphorical time machine opens possibilities for students *and* teachers to reorient their relationship with themselves, each other, and the world.

keywords: qualitative time dimensions; liminality; jazz; contemporary education; critical pedagogy.

re-cuperando la infancia: abrazar dimensiones temporales alternativas a través de la filosofía para niños

resumen

Esta propuesta nació de una experiencia en un instituto y pone de relieve las influencias generativas de la Filosofía para Niños (FpN) en los jóvenes adultos. En primer lugar, analizo y proporcionó ejemplos de cómo el sistema escolar tradicionalmente no valora el aprendizaje y el pensamiento filosófico al reducir el proceso a la dispensación preempaquetada de respuestas prefabricadas. Estas formas de aprender, también conocidas como modelo «bancario» de educación, devalúan las formas de conocer y estar en el mundo de los niños. Esta postura pedagógica, entre otros problemas, en un enfoque centrado en la dimensión cuantitativa-cronológica del tiempo, dejando poco o ningún espacio para la importancia del momento presente que pertenece y es natural en la mayoría de las experiencias infantiles. La parte central del documento es un intento de explicar mejor, mediante conceptos derivados de la antropología y la pedagogía, en qué consiste esta dimensión temporal alternativa y qué posibilidades abre dentro de los entornos educativos. En la sección final, sostengo que unirse a una comunidad de investigación como Filosofía para Niños siendo un adulto joven plantea una mayor complejidad, ya que romper con certezas arraigadas se hace más dificil. Sin embargo, también supone la oportunidad de entrar en una máquina del tiempo metafórica que nos devuelve a recuperar el tiempo de la infancia. Esta máquina del tiempo metafórica abre posibilidades para que alumnos *y* profesores reorienten su relación consigo mismos, con los demás y con el mundo.

palabras clave: dimensiones cualitativas del tiempo; liminalidad; jazz; educación contemporánea; pedagogía crítica.

re-cuperando a infância: abraçando dimensões temporais alternativas através da filosofia para crianças

resumo

Essa proposta nasceu de uma experiência em uma escola de ensino médio e destaca as influências geradoras da Filosofia para Crianças (P4C) em jovens adultos. Primeiramente, discuto e dou exemplos de como o sistema escolar tradicionalmente não valoriza o aprendizado e o pensamento filosófico, reduzindo o processo à distribuição pré-embalada de respostas prontas. Essas formas de aprendizado, também conhecidas como modelo "bancário" de educação, desvalorizam as formas que as crianças têm de conhecer e estar no mundo. Essa postura pedagógica, entre outros problemas, resulta em um foco na dimensão quantitativa-cronológica do tempo, deixando pouco ou nenhum espaço para a importância do momento presente, que pertence e é natural à maioria das experiências infantis. A parte central do artigo é uma tentativa de explicar melhor, por meio de conceitos derivados da antropologia e da pedagogia, em quê consiste essa dimensão alternativa do tempo e que possibilidades ela abre nos ambientes educacionais. Na seção final, defendo que participar de uma comunidade de investigação como a de Filosofia para Crianças como um jovem adulto

representa uma complexidade maior, pois é mais difícil romper com certezas consolidadas. No entanto, também envolve a oportunidade de entrar em uma máquina do tempo metafórica que nos permite recuperar o tempo da infância. Essa máquina do tempo metafórica abre possibilidades para que alunos e professores reorientem seu relacionamento consigo mesmos, uns com os outros e com o mundo.

palavras-chave: dimensões qualitativas de tempo; liminaridade; jazz; educação contemporânea; pedagogia crítica.

re-claiming childhood:

embracing alternative time dimensions through philosophy for children

introduction

This paper takes inspiration from my experience as a facilitator in Philosophy for Children (P4C) sessions at a high school, where I had the opportunity to engage with 17 and 18-year-old students. My observations during these sessions revealed a concerning lack of genuine engagement among the students, a challenge echoed by the philosophy teacher who welcomed me into their classroom. The teacher voiced frustration with the students' predisposition to rote memorization, noting a reluctance to involve in authentic and generative dialogic exchange, which is central to a philosophical enterprise. As I interacted with the students, a range of attitudes towards the P4C sessions emerged. Some openly questioned the purpose of engaging in philosophical discussion, seeking clear objectives or practical outcomes. Others appeared unsettled by the idea of practicing philosophy without a focus on the canonical works of individual philosophers—showing the inability to tell the difference between doing philosophy and studying the history of philosophy, having experienced only the latter. Despite these varied perspectives, one moment in particular stood out as profoundly illustrative of the broader challenges faced by educational institutions in fostering critical inquiry. A student, with a tone of distrust and disillusionment, remarked, in school, "we are not asked to think". This statement, both poignant and unsettling, encapsulated the barriers to cultivating deep intellectual engagement in educational settings.

It is from this point of reflection that I aim to embark on an exploration of what it means to think philosophically within the context of education. Drawing on Walter Kohan's (2014) insights, I propose to interpret *philosophical thinking* as a way of inquiry rooted fundamentally in questioning. Philosophy, in this sense, does not merely answer questions but inhabits them, transforming the act of questioning into a dynamic process of self-questioning. To think philosophically is to take a deeply personal stance, to carefully examine one's own perceptions, experiences, and values with openness and courage. This mode of thinking invites

us to embrace the profound possibility that both our questions and our answers have the power to reshape our understanding of ourselves and our place in the world.

The initial focus of this paper is the pervasive shortcomings of traditional school systems, which often fail to cultivate philosophical thinking, reducing learning to a mechanical transmission of pre-packaged knowledge, aimed more at dispensing and accumulating ready-made answers than fostering genuine inquiry. This reductive approach neglects the dynamic and open-ended nature of philosophical exploration. It perpetuates a linear and quantitative conception of time that prioritizes outcomes and measurable milestones, leaving little room for the qualitative richness of the present moment, a temporal dimension inherently linked to childhood. The central portion of this paper seeks to unpack this neglected temporal dimension, drawing on insights from anthropology, pedagogy, and philosophy of education to articulate an alternative understanding of time within educational contexts. Ancient Greek time dimensions offer a lens through which to examine how P4C reclaims the present as a space of active engagement and discovery. This shift enables learners to embrace uncertainty, navigate ambiguity, and cultivate a state of openness essential for both personal and collective growth. The final section of this paper addresses the specific complexities and opportunities that P4C presents for young adults, showing how joining a community of inquiry offers a metaphorical time machine, allowing participants to re-discover and reconnect with the temporal dimensions of childhood.

limits of contemporary education

The core idea behind Philosophy for Children lies in the recognition that children possess an innate philosophical disposition, which manifests as an unfiltered and authentic drive to question the world around them, often expressed through questions that adults may perceive as overly simplistic, lacking seriousness, or even inappropriate. This natural posture, often dismissed by adults as mere curiosity stemming from naivety, reflects a deep and persistent inclination to question, particularly to ask "why?", one of children's favorite words (Lipman, 1980). Curiosity, in this sense, is fundamentally about beginnings (Manguel, 2016),

but this genuine intellectual tension, characteristic of human beings and particularly of childhood, is frequently overlooked or even undervalued within traditional educational settings. Schools emphasize on predetermined content and structured curricula, rarely providing space for the exploration of questions that deeply matter to students (Santi, 2005). This happens because the prevailing conception of knowledge in contemporary education often values its utility in preparing individuals for the demands of a market-driven economic system. In this way, the contemporary educational system tends to suppress this natural disposition, replacing it with forms of thinking that have already been predetermined by others, or what can be called "a thinking already thought". By reducing the educational process to a perpetual deposit of content (Freire, 1971), students are trained to passively absorb pre-packaged, transferable knowledge rather than actively engage with complex and open-ended questions. Despite the etymological roots of the word *school* (σχολή, free time), which suggests a place of leisure and intellectual exploration, contemporary education is constrained by rigid structures that prioritize efficiency and standardization over curiosity and wonder. As a result, students are often presented with the illusion that every question has a clear, definitive ready-to-use answer, typically supplied by an authoritative external source. Such an instrumental and predetermined view of education shapes learning practices in ways that prioritize certainty, control, and measurable outcomes, leading to pedagogical approaches that systematically exclude uncertainty from the learning environment. By contrast, engaging children and teenagers in philosophical discussions can cultivate their ability to ask meaningful questions, offering a framework for exploring ideas they care about and encouraging them to develop critical, creative and caring thinking about their own experiences and the world around them.

As a matter of fact, fostering what can be described as a *wandering attitude*, which stands in stark opposition to the adult tendency to shield personal beliefs from scrutiny, is central to the experience of Philosophy for Children. This protective stance, often driven by the fear of doubt and ambiguity, contrasts sharply with the openness to the unknown that characterizes not only genuine philosophical inquiry but life itself. The absence of indeterminacy, therefore, not only limits the depth of learning but also deprives students of opportunities to

develop adaptive skills that are increasingly necessary in a complex and rapidly changing world. To address this limitation, it is essential to envision and create educational environments that actively invite ambiguity as an integral part of the learning process (Bolhuis, 2003). Philosophy for Children provides a space and a time for engaging in a philosophical inquiry process that embraces unpredictability (Birch, 2020), inviting the participants to navigate the complexity of ideas and to recognize that meaningful engagement with philosophical questions often leads to deeper exploration rather than immediate resolution:

> Il filosofare così diventa una pratica attiva di dis-orientamento, che valorizza lo "stare nell'incertezza" come condizione per affrontare le domande della vita. Ed anzi, il suo valore collettivo permette al "perdersi", in un'esperienza comune e condivisa, di diventare una componente chiave del processo che alimenta l'orientamento delle persone nell'arco della vita.[1] (Barreneche et al., 2019, p. 148)

setting up the metaphorical time machine: beyond kronos

The relationship with time is the central thread of this paper, a crucial aspect in both the organization and experience of schooling. The rigid structure that characterizes the educational environment is reflected both in the spatial and temporal organization. Consider the physical context, designed to be hierarchical rather than being communal: the teacher's desk is on one side and the students' desks on the other, all facing the teacher without the possibility of students interacting with or observing one another. This fixed arrangement is mirrored in the management of time. The temporal division of the school day imposes a uniform and fragmented rhythm that reflects a desire for meticulous and precise control over every single moment. Each school hour appears as a separate, self-contained unit, where students engage in specific activities dedicated to a subject distinct from the others. This dis-integration of time into inflexible, disconnected units creates a sense of discontinuity. The daily routine, consisting of repetitive actions and pre-established patterns, often transforms the educational experience into a monotonous and predictable cycle. The same subjects, the same teaching methods, and the continuous alternation of content without genuine

[1] "Philosophizing thus becomes an active practice of disorientation, which values 'being in uncertainty' as a condition for dealing with life's questions. And indeed, its collective value allows 'getting lost', in a common and shared experience, to become a key element in the process that nurtures people's orientation across the life span" (Translated by the author).

connection give students a sense of inertness, which sometimes diminishes their emotional and intellectual engagement. This pulse can ultimately reduce both students and teachers to figures operating almost mechanically, akin to automatons, executing routines without questioning the repetitiveness of their actions.

In my experience, the introduction of Philosophy for Children sessions in the classroom revealed significant potential to break this established school-time pattern. The opportunity to engage in an activity that does not conform to traditional curricular structures represented for students a moment to actually reflect on their own capacities and capabilities. The perception of this time as an opportunity for change evoked the metaphor of philosophical thinking as a "time machine", capable of catapulting students into new, more dynamic and stimulating dimensions, making them feel more involved and more a part of their educational experience. Such instances of agency are in stark contrast to most students' perception of the classroom dynamic. It does not go unnoticed among adolescents that their capacity for independent thought is neither acknowledged nor valued within formal education. To fully understand this sense of disempowerment, it is necessary to examine the roots of the phenomenon, starting with the ways in which childhood itself is conceptualized within educational and social frameworks.

In many cases, schools mirror a prevailing view of childhood as merely a transitional stage on the path to adulthood—a phase that is obligatory but ultimately incomplete (Kohan, 2014). This perspective frames children as adults-in-the-making, reducing their present experiences and insights to preparatory steps toward future maturity. Such a view imposes adult-centric frameworks on children, including a linear and chronological understanding of existence that often clashes with the ways in which children naturally engage with the world. By prioritizing adulthood as the ultimate goal, this approach can stifle the experiences and philosophical reflections of the youngest members of society, relegating their genuine inquiries to secondary importance. This dynamic risks paralyzing the philosophical capacities of children and adolescents, effectively silencing their innate curiosity and discouraging the exploration of complex, unresolved questions. However, it is important to recognize that some children

and youth do actively resist or rebel against these structural deficits. When they challenge these limitations—whether by questioning rigid norms, rejecting pre-packaged answers, or insisting on the value of their own inquiries—their "disobedience" often comes at a cost. Typically, such acts of defiance are met with forms of ostracism or punishment, ranging from social exclusion by peers to disciplinary measures imposed by authority figures. These responses serve to reinforce the status quo, creating a hostile environment for intellectual freedom and further deterring others from similar acts of resistance. In this way, the system not only inhibits curiosity but also penalizes those who dare to preserve and express it. Acknowledging and addressing these systemic issues within education is essential if we are to create learning environments that honor and nurture the philosophical potential of all students, regardless of age. Only by doing so can we ensure that schools become spaces where thinking is not only encouraged but celebrated as an integral part of human development.

In a Western worldview, we are accustomed to a singular temporality, the chronological one, a sequential progression from past to future. However, ancient Greeks recognized alternative temporal dimensions, such as αἰών (Aion) and καιρός (Kairos). The concept of χρόνος (Kronos) refers to the quantitative dimension of time—a structured, measurable, and linear framework that shapes the rhythms of daily existence, dictating schedules, routines, and the progression of life in predictable patterns. Allowing for the organization of society and the coordination of collective life, *Kronos* serves as a practical tool, essential for the management of tasks and the alignment of human actions within broader social and institutional structures. By focusing exclusively on its quantifiable aspects, we risk reducing time to a mere succession of measurable moments, stripped of the richness and depth found in human experience. Alternative conceptions of time challenge the rigid structure.

Kairos, for example, represents the qualitative dimension of time, serving as a counterpoint. It refers to moments imbued with unique significance—opportunities when something extraordinary and transformative occurs. These moments are not bound by the ordinary flow of time but exist as interruptions, where the possibility for change or insight emerges. The *kairological moment* is characterized by its immediacy, often described as an "eternal now".

This temporal rupture carries a sense of the divine or the sacred, a segment of time that stands apart from the chronological continuum. Rather than being measured or anticipated, *Kairos* is experienced, arising unpredictably; it is the time of seizing the opportunity to act, it calls for attentiveness and the capacity to respond to the demands of the present moment.

There is another alternative time dimension: *Aion. Aion* is a complex and multifaceted concept, often translated as "duration" or "life", yet it eludes precise definition due to its abstract and fluid nature. Unlike *Kronos*, which represents the measurable and sequential flow of time, or *Kairos*, which captures the qualitative, opportune moment, *Aion* exists outside the bounds of chronological time altogether. It signifies an absolute and immeasurable duration—one that is not tethered to the temporal markers that define ordinary human experience. Instead, it embodies a timeless essence, a continuous expanse that resists categorization within linear or even cyclical temporal frameworks. At its core, *Aion* is characterized by indeterminacy, beyond the constraints of beginnings and endings, often associated with the eternal duration of divine or cosmic existence. In classical thought, it was sometimes linked to the gods or metaphysical concepts, embodying a state of existence that transcends human temporality and gestures toward the infinite.

These last two overlooked dimensions of time are intimately connected to the experience of childhood. From a certain perspective, children seem to inhabit a temporality akin to *Kairos*, existing in an eternal present that is qualitatively rich and unbound by the rigid constraints of sequential time. While children are certainly capable of understanding the concepts of "before" and "after", their immersion in the present moment often takes precedence, especially during play. In their imaginative and unstructured activities, children stretch and expand the present, creating a space where they momentarily escape the dominance of *Kronos*, the measured and regulated time of schedules and routines. This unique relationship with time is evocatively captured in one of Heraclitus' fragments (DK B 52), which suggests a connection between *Aion* and a child playing. The fragment portrays *Aion* resembling a child engaged in play, symbolizing a distinct mode of being in which time is experienced as fluid, expansive, and creative (Kennedy & Kohan, 2016). This imagery underscores the idea that childhood is not

merely a preparatory phase leading to adulthood but a state of existence with its own intrinsic value and distinctive way of interacting with the world.

Recognizing childhood as a distinct human experience compels us to reevaluate the frameworks we use to understand and engage with it, both culturally and pedagogically. In this sense:

> Repensarmos nosso conceito de infância para expressar não somente uma etapa da vida, mas sim uma potência, uma força disruptiva e revolucionária, oposta às estruturas prontas e reprodutivas da adultez. Não um tempo específico, mas uma relação com o tempo.[2] (Contage, 2019, p. 12)

The temporal dimensions of *Aion* and *Kairos* invite embracing indeterminacy, an experience that, as previously stated, is not only desirable but profoundly transformative during Philosophy for Children sessions. This engagement with uncertainty represents a vital life experience and an essential component of education itself (Barreneche et al. 2019; Birch, 2020; Santi, 2020). Within this framework, participants are encouraged to immerse themselves in the fluidity of the present, allowing the constraints of past certainties and future expectations to momentarily fade.

inhabiting the present: liminality and jazz music

This phase, simultaneously daunting and necessary, finds elucidation through the anthropological lens of liminality, a complex and multifaceted idea that has been widely applied across various fields, including psychology, sociology, and performance studies. It encompasses diverse interpretations and nuances, which we aim to explore and borrow here, focusing particularly on its temporal and transformative dimensions as they pertain to a community. Van Gennep initiated his exploration of rites of passage by proposing a meaningful classification of all existing rites and in his attempt to press all ritual forms into one explanatory framework, and he emphasized the universality of these transitional experiences (Thomassen, 2009). Stressing the importance of transitions in any society, he identified rites of passage as a distinct category, consisting of three sub-categories: rites of separation, transition rites, and rites of incorporation (Van Gennep 1960). Rites of passages, in fact, unfold in three distinct phases: the

[2] "Let's rethink our concept of childhood to express not just a stage of life, but a power, a disruptive and revolutionary force, opposed to the ready-made and reproductive structures of adulthood. Not a specific time, but a relationship with time" (Translated by the author).

separation from the prior world, the world as known until that moment; the liminal phase, marked by ambiguity and transition; and the eventual reintegration into a redefined world. Within this framework, liminality represents a threshold state—a space between what was and what will be, where the ordinary structures of life are temporarily suspended.

Building on this foundation, the anthropologist Victor Turner (1967) offers a profound expansion of the concept of liminality, describing it as a unique state that exists "in and out of time" and "in and out of the secular social structure". It is an existence "betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial" (p. 95), highlighting that liminality also served to understand the human reactions, the way in which personality was shaped by liminality, the sudden foregrounding of agency, and the tying together of thought and experience (Thomassen, 2009). Moreover, liminality is applicable to both space and time. Single moments, longer periods, or even entire epochs can be liminal. Similarly, liminal places can range from specific thresholds to more extended areas, such as "borderlands", or even entire countries situated in significant in-between positions between larger civilizations. Above all, the concept can also be applied at various scales: it pertains to single individuals, larger groups such as cohorts or villages, whole societies, and, arguably, entire civilizations (Thomassen, 2009).

Liminality is characterized by a new temporality that is no longer given but *in fieri*, in the process of becoming. This open-ended temporal framework underscores the creative and transformative potential of liminality, as it fosters the emergence of novel possibilities and structures. As Thomassen (2009) notes, "Liminality does not and cannot 'explain'. In liminality, there is no certainty concerning the outcome. It is a world of contingency, where events and ideas, and even reality itself, can be carried in different directions" (p. 5). This openness to multiple possibilities emphasizes its transformative potential while acknowledging the inherent unpredictability of what lies beyond fixed boundaries.

Liminality has a transcendent nature: within the liminal phase, participants inhabit a temporality that integrates the qualities of *Aion* and *Kairos*. The focus shifts away from the sequential flow of past, present, and future toward an

immersive engagement with the now; freed from the compulsion to anticipate what happens next, individuals in this phase may find themselves able to dwell deeply in the act of questioning, transforming doubt and uncertainty into sources of possibility and growth. The emphasis on the present opens up opportunities for profound transformation. It is within this temporal framework that the act of questioning takes on a generative and liberating role. Questions are no longer perceived as obstacles to be resolved or stepping stones to predetermined answers. Instead, they become invitations to explore new perspectives, reconsider assumptions, and engage with the complexity of the unknown.

During P4C sessions, the conventional demand for definitive answers can be deconstructed, creating space for a deeper and more authentic mode of inquiry. Rather than framing questions as mere tools to elicit correct responses, the process of inquiry becomes an open-ended journey. This divergence from traditional patterns allows participants to embrace their own sense of exploration, where each question generates further questions, nurturing an ongoing dialogue that resists closure. Inquiry is no longer a means to an end but a dynamic and evolving practice that values the process more than the outcome.

In this context, the notion of "inhabiting the present" gains particular significance, and its depth can be more clearly understood through the metaphor of jazz music. As a genre renowned for its emphasis on improvisation and extemporaneity, jazz offers a compelling lens through which we can explore what happens when we truly experience the present. Santi (2017) provides an insightful analogy between Philosophy for Children and jazz, suggesting that both involve a kind of living in the moment, where the participants engage actively with the unfolding dynamics around them. Jazz, as a musical form, pushes its performers to embrace the here and now. Its improvisational nature

> … 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. (Santi, 2017, p. 637)

Key concepts from jazz, such as *swing* and *groove*, provide a rich framework for understanding the nature of philosophical dialogue in P4C. *Swing*, with its characteristic movement and playful back-and-forth, captures the essence of the

unpredictable and lively rhythm of a philosophical community of inquiry. Swing, in this sense, is not merely a musical term but an invitation to embrace the fluid, dynamic nature of philosophical engagement, where ideas bounce between participants in a collaborative, ever-shifting rhythm. It reflects how participants in P4C, like jazz musicians, enter a shared space of intellectual discovery, where the exchange of ideas is characterized by invigorating, unstructured flow that encourages creativity and responsiveness.

Similarly, *groove* in jazz refers to the collective flow that arises when musicians attune to one another and synchronize their contributions to create a cohesive performance. In the context of P4C, this element highlights the importance of collaboration and mutual attunement within the philosophical inquiry. The process of "getting into the groove" of a philosophical discussion involves more than just exchanging ideas—it requires deep listening, empathy, and a willingness to engage with the ideas of others in a way that fosters collective understanding. As Oliveros (2005) emphasizes, deep listening is a vital practice in any collaborative process, and in P4C it means not only hearing others' thoughts but also embracing the silences and spaces that arise in inquiry. These moments of ambiguity, much like the pauses in a jazz performance, open up moments for reflection and for new possibilities to emerge. Achieving a "philosophical groove" in P4C is not automatic; it requires practice, attentiveness, and courage. Participants must cultivate the ability to listen carefully, to remain open to the evolving flow of questions, and to relinquish any desire for control over the direction of the discussion. This willingness to allow the conversation to unfold organically is akin to the improvisational spirit of jazz, where musicians trust the process and allow the music to take shape in unexpected ways. Importantly, this collective rhythm does not erase the individuality of participants, rather it forges a shared direction. Just as jazz musicians integrate diverse melodies, tempos, and styles into a unified performance, so too do participants in P4C bring their unique perspectives and experiences to the dialogue, contributing to a shared yet multifaceted intellectual journey. This harmony between individual voices and collective movement is what gives both jazz and P4C their depth and transformative potential.

In jazz and P4C, the present moment is not merely a temporal marker but a space of continuous creation. The dynamic interplay between individual agency and collective engagement allows both the music of jazz and the pedagogy of philosophizing to transcend the limitations of past and future, opening spaces of creative exploration that are ever-evolving and deeply rooted in the lived experience of the participants.

thinking together

According to Masschelein (2010), being truly present in the moment involves a profound capacity for attention—a concept that goes beyond mere concentration to signify *attending*, authentically being present and engaged with the here and now. This form of attention is not primarily about the acquisition of specific knowledge or the pursuit of predetermined objectives; instead, it emphasizes creating the conditions necessary for meaningful experiences to emerge. It is a state of openness and receptivity that allows individuals to encounter the world in its fullness, unmediated by rigid expectations or preconceptions. For a genuine transformation to occur, one must transcend the limitations of individual intentions, which are often constrained by personal biases, narrow goals, and fixed viewpoints. This process of liberation involves cultivating flexible and expansive perspectives, enabling a person to move beyond the confines of self-interest and habitual or ordinary ways of thinking. By doing so, one can maintain a fluid and adaptable gaze, thereby seizing opportunities to merge one's own horizon of understanding with that of others. Gadamer (1989) articulates this as the fusion of horizons, a dialogical process that enriches both personal insight and collective meaning-making. In the context of Philosophy for Children, this approach is integral to the inquiry process, which seamlessly intertwines personal reflection with communal exploration. Contrary to the popular notion that it is a solitary endeavor, thinking is inherently social in nature. Likewise, learning cannot be understood as a purely private, individualistic, or competitive endeavor. Instead, it is an innate collective process that thrives on interaction, dialogue, and shared experiences. However, reimagining learning in this way requires disrupting hierarchical dynamics with deliberate effort, an engagement in mutual commitment and a willingness to embrace risks (hooks,

2003, 2010). For this reason, the P4C model emphasizes the dynamic interplay between individual contributions, a collaborative reflection of the group that unfolds as a polyphony (Santi, 2015; Santi & Zorzi, 2016; Zorzi et al., 2019). To put it in hooks' words

> I enter the classroom with the assumption that we must build "community" in order to create a climate of openness and intellectual rigor … I think that a feeling of community creates a sense that there is a shared commitment and a common good that binds us. What we all ideally share is the desire to learn—to receive actively knowledge that enhances our intellectual development and our capacity to live more fully in the world. It has been my experience that one way to build community in the classroom is to recognize the value of each individual voice. (hooks, 1994, p. 40)

And again,

> we do not necessarily need to hear and know what is stated in its entirety … we do not need to "master" or conquer the narrative as a whole …we may know in fragments … we may learn from spaces of silence as well as speech … [and] in the patient act of listening to another tongue we may subvert that culture of capitalist frenzy and consumption that demands all desire must be satisfied immediately. (hooks, 1994, p. 174)

Personal ideas are not sidelined but are deeply embedded in the community setting, where diverse perspectives serve as a catalyst for growth. Exposure to a multiplicity of viewpoints is essential to prevent intellectual stagnation, as it challenges entrenched assumptions and fosters a deeper engagement with complex issues. The aim of such inquiry is not to compete for the fastest or most accurate solution to a given problem but to foster a collective journey toward understanding. Progress, in this context, is measured not by individual achievements, as oft the case with standardized and by rote learning. Instead, it is measured by the shared movement of the group toward a deeper, more nuanced comprehension of the questions at hand. The process mirrors the rhythm of a collaborative effort, where individuals contribute their unique insights while remaining attuned to the evolving direction of the group. It could be said that the inquiry is conducted by a macro-subject oriented toward forms of community, despite the presence of diverging voices (Cosentino & Lupia, 2021).

A change of paradigm of this kind is particularly challenging for young adults, many of whom have been conditioned by years of educational environments that emphasize constant achievement and competition. For individuals accustomed to striving for top marks, cultivating an openness to doubt

and alternative perspectives often proves to be an uphill battle. Personal experiences and firmly held beliefs tend to calcify into rigid positions, and the pervasive drive for external validation further undermines the flexibility of thought. Within this framework, there is a natural tendency to regard one's perspective, shaped and supported by individual experiences, as universally correct. The entrenched logic of the school system, characterized by a competitive mindset that rewards definitive answers and swift problem-solving, exacerbates this rigidity. It poses a significant obstacle to the receptivity required for genuine listening, critical-creative-caring thinking, and embracing new insights. This struggle for openness is not confined to educational settings but reflects broader societal norms, particularly those that dominate many workplaces. These environments often prioritize efficiency and measurable outcomes, implicitly devaluing processes that lack immediate or tangible results. While such an approach is undoubtedly effective in contexts that demand rapid responses—such as medical teams making life-saving decisions in real-time—it fails to acknowledge the necessity and value of processes that require deliberate contemplation and exploration. In this sense, the school system becomes once again a mirror of these utilitarian assumptions, shaping young adults to view any engagement with open-ended inquiry as a waste of *time*.

The prioritization of utility and speed within both educational and professional spheres fosters an aversion to unpredictability. Immersed in systems that celebrate control and expected outcomes, students and adults alike often struggle to relinquish the familiar structure of a question-answer paradigm. When this structure is disrupted—when solutions are not immediately apparent, and the focus shifts to navigating through ambiguity—many experience a sense of disorientation. This discomfort stems from an ingrained belief that time spent on processes without clear or immediate resolutions is unproductive. In the context of education, this manifests as a perception that engaging with doubt or embracing alternative temporal dimensions, such as philosophical reflection, is not time worthy.

However, it is precisely this willingness to relinquish the need for control that is essential for fostering non-dogmatic reflection and meaningful personal growth. The act of embracing alternative perspectives, especially those that

challenge one's established viewpoints, is crucial for developing the capacity to think critically, creatively and empathetically. This openness requires more than intellectual flexibility; it demands a profound reorientation of attitudes toward time, process, and outcomes. In philosophical inquiry, such as that practiced in P4C, the discomfort associated with disorientation becomes an opportunity rather than a hindrance (Barreneche & Santi, 2022). When participants are encouraged to dwell in the present moment—*hic et nunc*—they may engage in a form of inquiry that values exploration over resolution. This temporal shift, away from the relentless forward motion of task completion and goal achievement, allows for a deeper engagement with ideas. It challenges participants to sit with doubt, to navigate uncertainty without rushing to closure, and to appreciate the richness of the questioning process itself.

re-claiming childhood

Building on the arguments outlined above, I propose that Philosophy for Children (P4C) sessions function as *metaphorical time machines*, enabling adolescents to revisit the temporal dimensions intrinsic to childhood. These sessions offer a unique space where participants suspend entrenched beliefs, embracing a liminal phase marked by indefiniteness and openness. This suspension of rigid structures of chronological time fosters a present moment enriched by collective thought and shared inquiry. Such engagement mirrors the timeless, fluid rhythm of childhood, characterized by spontaneity, curiosity, and freedom from overbearing expectations.

What makes this rediscovery particularly profound is its inherently communal nature. The metaphorical return to childhood is not an isolated journey but one that thrives in the context of a collaborative community. It is to be hoped and encouraged that the latter develop a creative imprint. This community is not merely a space for interaction but a dynamic environment where collective imagination and creativity flourish. It becomes a site of co-creation, where diverse perspectives, experiences, and ideas converge to generate new understandings and possibilities. Such communal creativity underscores the transformative potential of working together to address shared challenges and reimagine the world together. As Haiven and Khasnabish (2014) suggest, "only when we

recognize that creativity is a collaborative process (not an individual possession) can creativity help us transform our lives and our world creatively, and employ creativity for the good of everyone" (p. 192). In this sense, creativity represents a public good, a vital resource and core element with the potential to drive meaningful and collective transformation. However, Haiven and Khasnabish also highlight a growing crisis surrounding creativity and its counterpart, imagination. This crisis emerges from the pervasive tendency to commodify these capacities, treating them as tools for private gain rather than as resources to be nurtured for the public good. Such an approach, that contributes to the many negative consequences of the static and traditional structure of education, undermines the broader societal benefits that creativity and imagination could offer, limiting their transformative potential to serve collective well-being.

In the P4C framework, the process of grappling with uncertainty and navigating disorientation becomes a shared endeavor, where the dynamic interplay of perspectives and the co-construction of meaning foster a sense of shared direction, a groove. This practice represents a radical shift in education, challenging traditional school structures and the predictability of everyday life. It opposes the utilitarian focus on efficiency and measurable outcomes, creating a space where thinking is valued for its own sake. For adolescents, many of whom internalize a competitive, goal-oriented mindset, P4C serves as a reminder of the human capacity to transcend learned habits and limitations. It invites them to reclaim their childlike wonder and embrace an existence unbound by rigid structures. This reclamation is not regression but a reawakening—an acknowledgment that openness, curiosity, and spontaneity are accessible at any stage of life. Adults, too, are reminded that breaking free from constraining patterns is always possible. Here, reclaiming childhood signifies the liberation of thought and being from time-bound expectations. Through open inquiry, participants of all ages discover the transformative potential of a shared philosophical journey.

Ultimately, P4C reorients education, challenging traditional pedagogy and reshaping notions of time, community, and inquiry. P4C creates a space where participants may reconnect with their authentic selves, and embrace the richness of shared, present-centered existence. The dismissal of children's philosophical

questioning reflects a narrow, utilitarian view of knowledge, undermining its exploratory nature. P4C, by contrast, legitimizes and nurtures children's innate curiosity, celebrating inquiry as vital to intellectual and personal growth. Integrating uncertainty into learning enriches educational environments, preparing students to think critically, act creatively, and navigate the complexities of life. Within P4C, the community actively co-creates understanding, enhancing personal insights through mutual questioning and shared exploration.

The association between childhood and alternative temporalities has profound implications for education. By embracing the immersive, playful creativity of childhood, P4C encourages learners to experience time as a dynamic, transformative process rather than a linear progression toward fixed goals. This perspective respects childhood's unique temporality while fostering qualities of curiosity, adaptability, and reflective thinking – attributes that remain vital throughout life. As Gould and Vrba (1982) highlight, "exaptation" captures the idea of repurposing qualities originally evolved for one function into new uses. Such an approach enriches P4C and offers a broader educational vision that values inquiry as much as its outcomes. By appreciating and embracing the alternative temporalities of childhood, we not only honor this trans-formative stage but also expand our understanding of how humans can engage with time itself.

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