

## childhood & philosophy

núcleo de estudos de filosofias e infâncias [nefi/uerj] international council of philosophical inquiry with children [icpic]

e-issn: 1984-5987 | p-issn: 2525-5061

dossier "philosophy with children across boundaries"

# improvising in the community of philosophical inquiry: a way to learn to inhabit uncertainty

## author

## eleonora zorzi

university of padova, padova, italy e-mail: eleonora.zorzi@unipd.it https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9337-9109

doi: 10.12957/childphilo.2025.89428



## abstract

This theoretical contribution proposes an open reflection on uncertainty, present in contemporary social and educational discussions, and on the value that learning to inhabit such "uncertainties" have for the well-being can of individuals and communities. Perceiving different alternatives before making a choice, finding yourself lost when faced with the ambiguity of some information, and feeling disorientated when faced with complexity, are all characteristics of this elusive "uncertainty" (Barreneche & Uncertainty Santi, 2022). can be perceived negatively if it provokes fear, perception anxiety, worry, of vulnerability (Hillen et al., 2017) or in a constructive way if it appears as a vital engine for research (Tauritz, 2019). Community of philosophical inquiry (CPI) - as conceptualized and promoted in the Philosophy for Children (P4C) curriculum - becomes a "safe creativity environment" (Weinstein, 2016), in which to learn to inhabit uncertainty. A CPI that improvises (Zorzi & Santi, 2023), develops and makes conscious dispositions towards uncertainty, learning to see alternatives as a resource, ambiguities as creative horizons of meaning, and complexity as a collective performance to be experienced. Six

improvisational dimensions (1)respecting diversities, (2)trusting possibilities, (3) building a sense of community, (4) opening attitude towards changes, (5) explorative attitude, (6) creative passion, emerged from other previous researches (Zorzi, Camedda, Santi, 2019), are proposed to orient facilitators' and CoI's training, dialoguing with the "nine recurring moments of disequilibrium" suggested by Karin Murris (2008).

**keywords:** uncertainty; improvisation; community of philosophical inquiry; philosophy for children; collective performance.

## improvisar en la comunidad de investigación filosófica: una forma de aprender a habitar la incertidumbre

## resumen

Esta contribución teórica propone una reflexión abierta sobre la incertidumbre, tan presente en los debates sociales y educativos contemporáneos, y sobre el valor que puede tener para el bienestar de las personas y las comunidades habitar aprender esas а «incertidumbres». Percibir diferentes alternativas antes de tomar una decisión, encontrarse perdido ante la ambigüedad información de alguna y sentir desorientación frente a la complejidad, son características de esta escurridiza «incertidumbre» (Barreneche, Santi, 2022). La incertidumbre puede ser percibida de forma negativa si provoca preocupación, ansiedad, miedo, percepción de vulnerabilidad (Hillen et al., 2017) o de forma constructiva si aparece como un motor vital para la investigación (Tauritz, 2019). La comunidad de indagación filosófica (CPI) -tal y como se conceptualiza y promueve en el plan de estudios de la Philosophy for Children (P4C) - se convierte en un «entorno de creatividad seguro» (Weinstein, 2016), en el que aprender a habitar la incertidumbre. Una IPC que improvisa (Zorzi, Santi, 2023), desarrolla hace conscientes y

disposiciones hacia la incertidumbre, aprendiendo a ver las alternativas como un recurso, las ambigüedades como horizontes creativos de sentido, y la complejidad como una actuación colectiva experimentar. Seis а dimensiones de la improvisación - (1) respeto a las diversidades, (2) confianza en las posibilidades, (3) construcción de un sentido de comunidad, (4) actitud de apertura a los cambios, (5) actitud exploratoria, (6) *creativa,* surgidas pasión de otras investigaciones previas (Zorzi et al., 2019), se proponen para orientar la formación de facilitadores y CdI, dialogando con los «nueve momentos recurrentes de desequilibrio» sugeridos por Karin Murris (2008).

**palabras clave:** incertidumbre; improvisación; comunidad de indagación filosófica; filosofía para niños; actuación colectiva.

## improvisar na comunidade de investigação filosófica: uma forma de aprender a habitar a incerteza

## resumo

Esta reflexão teórica propõe uma discussão aberta sobre a incerteza, tão presente nos debates sociais е educacionais contemporâneos, e sobre o valor que aprender a conviver com essas "incertezas" pode ter para o bem-estar de indivíduos e comunidades. Perceber diferentes alternativas antes de fazer uma escolha, sentir-se perdido diante da ambiguidade de certas informações e experimentar desorientação ao lidar com a complexidade são características dessa "incerteza" tão difícil de definir (Barreneche & Santi, 2022). A incerteza pode ser vista de forma negativa se provocar medo, preocupação, ansiedade ou sensação de vulnerabilidade (Hillen et al., 2017), ou pode ser encarada de maneira construtiva quando funciona como um impulso vital para а 2019). investigação (Tauritz, А Comunidade de Investigação Filosófica (CIF) - tal como concebida e promovida no currículo de Filosofia para Crianças (FpC) - torna-se um "ambiente seguro para a criatividade" (Weinstein, 2016), onde se aprende a habitar as incertezas. Uma CIF que improvisa (Zorzi & Santi, 2023), desenvolve e conscientiza atitudes diante da incerteza, aprendendo a enxergar alternativas como recursos, ambiguidades como horizontes criativos de significado e complexidade como uma experiência coletiva a ser vivida. Seis dimensões da improvisação - (1) respeito diversidades; confiança às (2) nas possibilidades; (3) construção de um senso de comunidade; (4) abertura às mudanças; (5) atitude exploratória; (6) paixão criativa, identificadas em pesquisas anteriores (Zorzi et al., 2019) - são propostas para orientar a formação de facilitadores e das próprias CIFs, dialogando com os "nove momentos recorrentes de desequilíbrio" sugeridos por Karin Murris (2008).

palavras-chave: incertezas; improvisação; comunidade de investigação filosófica; filosofia para crianças; performance coletiva.

## improvising in the community of philosophical inquiry: a way to learn to inhabit uncertainty

## introduction: paper's objectives and trajectories

This contribution wishes to propose an open reflection on uncertainty, philosophy, and improvisation, as dimensions strictly related, and present in the Community of Inquiry (CoI) experience, within the Philosophy for Children's (P4C) curriculum. The idea is to valorize the learning dimensions that inhabiting uncertainty may have, for the well-being of communities and individuals and to focus the attention on the facilitators' and CoI's training, as an occasion to highlight these opportunities. Living the CoI as a "safe creativity environment" (Weinstein, 2016), every participant can become familiar with these life's aspects and concepts (uncertainty, philosophy, and improvisation), and collectively share and distribute the implications they involve.

In a time in which the right of "indecision" seems to be lost, having time for being lost in the decision, to inhabit uncertainty, would be an opportunity (Barreneche & Santi, 2022). We cannot realize a safer and predictable world, but we can learn to be ready to accept the "black swan" (Taleb, 2014) and try to get the best.

In social life, almost everything is produced by rare but important shocks and jumps, yet almost everything that is studied in that field focuses on the "normal", especially in bell curve inference methods, which say almost nothing. Why? Because the bell curve ignores large deviations and fails to handle them, yet makes us believe we have tamed uncertainty. [...] Each of us believes we know how things are, in a world that is much more complicated (or random) than we think<sup>1</sup>. (Taleb, 2014, pp. 18, p. 32)

## uncertainty and improvisation: a theoretical glance

We are all familiar with uncertainty and uncertain experiences since we are born; the complexity of the world appears to us (and sometimes overstates us), and we are called – before in a social and interpersonal way, and then in an interiorized and individual way (Vygotskij, 1986) – to interpret the events and to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Translation from the Italian version by the author of the paper.

give them a meaning (Mead, 1934; Santi, 2006). The space (or time) that we perceive between the "happening" and the possibility to give it a name and interpret it (or to make a decision to face it), is what we call uncertainty.

Uncertainty can be aversive; large bodies of research from multiple disciplines have demonstrated that uncertainty provokes fear, worry, anxiety, perceptions of vulnerability, and avoidance of decision-making (Babrow, 1992). On the other side, uncertainty can appear to be a vital engine for research; it is a cognitive sensation that penetrates the human being in a subjective experience of wondering and doubting (Hillen et al., 2017; Tauritz, 2019). Individuals thus engage in a variety of different responses to both minimize the negative effects and maximize the positive effects of uncertainty (Hillen et al. 2017). Coping with uncertainty becomes very useful and it is an all-encompassing phenomenon including tolerance of ambiguity as well as other potential sources of uncertainty, such as probability (Taleb, 2014) and complexity (Gershenson, 2013).

On the one hand, an individual can construe uncertainty as a fundamentally negative phenomenon, and tolerance as a response aimed at avoiding or mitigating its harms. On the other hand, one can construe uncertainty as a beneficial state to be desired and sought and tolerance as a response aimed at obtaining benefits (Hillen et al., 2017). When people experience anxiety or negative emotions they appraise uncertainty as a threat, and when they experience positive emotions they appraise it as an opportunity (Brashers, 2001). Perceiving different alternatives before making a choice, finding yourself lost when faced with the ambiguity of some information, and feeling disorientated when faced with complexity (Barreneche & Santi, 2022), are all characteristics of this elusive "uncertainty."

5



Fig. 1 - Integrative model of uncertainty tolerance (Hillen et al. 2017, p. 71). Source: Author

As visualized (Fig. 1) in the model proposed by Hillen et al. (2017) we can have three different dimensions of the appraisal of uncertainty's perception: the cognitive dimension, the emotional and behavioral ones. The educational processes promoted at school should sustain students in recognizing and valorizing the positive response for every dimension, nurturing uncertainty tolerance.

Our everyday context reflects and amplifies social discontinuity and variability; it is a context that makes teaching an activity full of unexpected events, unexpected surprises, and unforeseen changes that take place, but within a system that seems to assume that teaching and learning activities can be controllable or predictable. The everyday language in schools is saturated with metaphors that objectify children's minds and give them a false picture of objectivity, certainty, and control (Murris, 2008). In reality, the only thing teachers can really expect every day with total confidence, as Brookfield (2006) reminds us, is uncertainty and the unexpected. Thus, to learn to inhabit uncertainty and educate a positive

disposition towards it we need educational environments that can tolerate, even invite, uncertainty into the learning process, embrace and encourage it, for example promoting improvisation as an educational creative process (Santi & Zorzi, 2016). Improvisation - as we shall see later - can teach us that even if we cannot reach "certainty" in our complex world, and in our life, we can try to feel some "certitude" (Peters, 2012). The same perspective around "uncertainty" can be offered to us by philosophy.

Philosophy, says Walter Kohan (2014) is an irreverent game that starts with things that really exist, but then twists them, criticizes them, declares their illegitimacy, and opens the door to doubt, uncertainty, and the most inappropriate questions. Philosophy plays a constructive role in rearranging, shifting, displacing, and reframing ideas and beliefs as philosophy attempts to exist in places of uncertainty, exploration, possibility, and imagination (Haynes, 2008): inquiring philosophy in the community can transform all these collective experiences into inner and personal resources.

The pedagogy of a community of inquiry is based on the Vygotskyan (Vygotskij, 1986) assumption that children will learn to think for themselves if they engage in the social practice of thinking together, so experiencing uncertainties together can promote the ability to inhabit them by themselves in everyday life. This method of philosophy, transformed into a communitarian thinking experience, presents philosophical dialogue as a way to learn to distribute the successes and uncertainties of the process of creating answers to the issues raised (Barreneche & Santi, 2022). Dialogical engagements with children do have outcomes, but they are unexpected, provisional, and creative. P4C can open up a space in which adults and children both juggle to "think otherwise" (Murris, 2008).

The community of philosophical inquiry (CPI), in P4C, becomes in this way a "safe creativity environment" (Weinstein, 2016), in which to learn to inhabit – cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally – uncertainties, enhancing the social dimensions. This can be done, in a particular way, by fostering improvisational processes during the session. Improvisation is defined by unplanned collaborative performance, where process and product co-occur; an improviser must engage in a heuristic search for the means for interpersonal, dialogic communication within an ensemble that, in turn, requires the same heuristic investment (Zorzi & Santi, 2023), as a facilitator is invited to do in a CPI (Zorzi & Santi, 2020).

Each (improvisation) performance is imbued with a sense of discovery: the artist expands his relationship with his instrument and materials, learning anew how his instrument works. Uncertainty is not one driven by fear, the hesitation is not due to anxiety, it is a condition characterized by "unlimited pleasure" in an invention with open-ended trajectories toward the possibility of all forms, figures, and meanings (Yang, 2014).

In a sense, what is being mooted here is an approach to improvisation that breaks with the dominant view that is fascinated with uncertainty as it is played out from moment to moment within the unfolding of the artwork. We are instead proposing what might be described as a long-distance or slowed-down model [...] that has a much greater scope and much longer duration than any individual piece. As such, whole life might be seen as an improvisation, whereas individual works or groups of works (improvised or not) are but components in the much greater aesthetic and existential enterprise of integrating thought and form or meaning and configuration. (Peters, 2012, p. 4)

Each successive moment in improvisation is one of many (perhaps infinite) possibilities; as such, an improvisational encounter provides a direct and repeated experience with social uncertainty. Since improvisation involves encountering uncertainty in a non-judgmental, trusting and mutually supportive environment, new associations developed through improvisation are likely non-threatening or even pleasant (Felsman et al. 2020).

[...] (in improvisation) what gives this initiatory moment intensity is not its uncertainty but rather the irreducible duality of certainty and certitude [...], the certainty that the beginning could be other than it is, coupled with the certitude that here and now it will begin like this [...]. Something has to happen, something will happen, neither life nor art can await the arrival of certainty [...]. (Peters, 2012, p. 7)

Across two experiments a research group (Felsman et al., 2020) gives evidence that improvisational theater training causes increases in divergent thinking, uncertainty tolerance, and affective well-being. Their finding confirmed that a brief (20 min) session of improvisation training causes increases in uncertainty tolerance, developing paths that are very accessible and different. So, why not cultivate this attitude in the facilitators' training and in the communities' development, through activity and exercises?

"Improvisation" and "inquiry" are collective and communitarian processes that do not exist in isolation and solipsism. These practices are generated from encounters among individuals, among thoughts, among the unforeseen, and among voices and aspirations. These processes can educate participants to intone a soul, fusion, cool, swing version of live pedagogy, free from chains and free of wandering and wondering at the world, immersed in the groove of the moment, devoted to risk and open to the infinite possibilities of improvisation (Zorzi & Santi, 2023, p.19).

In collective improvisation, the same principles that rule the CPI are applied in collective governance: collective improvisation, as in P4C, is a multi-narrative environment that enables those who engage in it – facilitators and students – to tolerate multiple perspectives. It values questions over answers and feelings of uncertainty and contingency over comfort (Kizel, 2021).

If we share the idea that inquiring in the community can be compared to a collective improvisation, we can reason that the inter-participant dynamics developed in a CPI could be understood as a performance (Zorzi & Santi, 2023), intended as what participants can do in their current environment while they are involved in a lived experience.

A community of inquiry that improvises (jazzing-community of inquiry) develops and makes conscious dispositions towards uncertainty, learning to see alternatives as a resource, ambiguities as creative horizons of meaning, and complexity as a collective performance to be experienced.

An inquiring-jazzing community can be preparatory for wandering because, in jazzing and improvising, individuals educate themselves on the unrepeatable and find meaning together in the small sounds, voices, and ideas, even when they get lost, and this can also sustain the wonder of the philosophical inquiry (Zorzi & Santi, 2023, p.15).

Through actively seeking disequilibrium, these issues can be raised not only in classrooms, staff rooms, and by teacher educators, but also can include children who are significant stakeholders in the difficult decisions the practice throws up (Murris, 2008).

Often without being aware of it, educators bring their epistemological assumptions and political views to their practice, and the pedagogy gives rise to uncertainty, and therefore insecurity, in the facilitation process (Haynes,

2005, 2007). Disequilibrium regularly emerges in my own practice, often deliberately provoked, as it exposes educators' struggle with the changed teacher/pupil relationships and their different roles as educator. (pp. 676-677)

## dialoguing with karin murris's perspective: a way to inhabit uncertainties, and surfing disequilibrium in the cpi

In her paper of 2008, "*Philosophy with Children, the Stingray and Disequilibrium*" Karin Murris, makes us reflect on nine specific recurring moments of disequilibrium, usually happening during a Philosophy for Children session. She reminds us that in teacher education the educational value of disequilibrium is that each community of inquiry needs to map the territory when disequilibrium occurs and construct their own answers collaboratively (Murris, 2008, p. 677). We would like to interpret these moments of disequilibrium as the space and time where the "uncertainty" is perceived (by the community of inquiry and by the facilitators), and we would like to suggest six dimensions related to improvisation (Zorzi et al., 2019), as possible dimensions to which orient facilitators' and CPI's training, to face these moments.

Inspired by performative arts (i.e. theater, music, or dance) it is possible to develop active and creative engagement in participants, which can support work alongside critical and caring thinking in philosophical inquiry. To take such a perspective, the community needs to be familiar with these practices and have an inquiring and improvising habitus. For example, it can be generative imagine exercises to inhabit uncertainty, starting from six improvisational dimensions which can sustain and make flourish uncertainty tolerance and complex thinking in the community, during its inquiring travel and process (Zorzi et al., 2019)<sup>2</sup>:

(1) *Respecting diversities:* in improvisation, to respect diversity means to research it, to support it, usually differentiating and personalizing behaviors and procedures; during an improvisational process the richness of plurality is meant as a source of new paths to be explored and followed. In improvisation, respecting diversity means also managing the art of "unlearning" (Barrett, 2013), welcoming different ideas thanks to legitimate peripheral participation (Wenger, 2006);

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The translation and re-adaptation from the Italian version of the six dimensions of improvisation is by the author of the paper.

(2) *Trusting possibilities:* in improvisation to trust possibilities means knowing that there is never only one possible or right way to teach or learn something. Improvisers develop and seek a plurality of ways and opportunities to stay in the inquiring and educational relationship. Participants trust above all in the authentic process, always remaining open to the possibility of learning something new, even if it is not predictable, programmable, assessable in advance;

(3) *Building a sense of community:* in improvisation to build a sense of community means to research, act, and experience the context striving to be inclusive, nurturing a sense of belonging to a local, collective, universal identity, in which nature, human feeling also plays an important role (Alterhaug, 2010). Acting together is a constant dialogue, with a view to the reciprocity of change, as a fruitful opportunity for individual and collective development, embedded in a community that includes everyone, or rather, excludes exclusion (Santi, 2014);

(4) *Opening attitude towards changes*: in improvisation being open towards changes means contrasting fixity with openness to transformations, to changes of direction, continuously working on procedures, on themselves, modifying themselves also thanks to the stimuli and proposals of others, deeply grasping the meaning of a return teaching (Pask, 1975);

(5) *Exploratory attitude:* in improvisational processes, every thought and every act is based on exploratory attitudes of research, discovery, and provocation, through processes of relationships that allow one to be in contact with what is not yet known in cognitive, communicative, affective, physical, behavioral dimensions: Improvising means going beyond the margins, beyond the boundaries;

(6) *Creative passion:* in improvisation having fun, being enthusiastic, being creatively passionate about what is there, about what is happening, is a baseline. Leaving room for creativity that allows participants to find the "red thread" in unknown, unthinkable horizons, educates them to admire the beautiful and harmonious in new meanings, or in those yet to be attributed, to find dubious paths and to experiment with them, with collective sense and shared vision.

These six dimensions can dialogue with the nine moments of disequilibrium critically recognized by Murris (2008) and support the facilitator

11

and the community of inquiry to navigate through the uncertainty, without losing the research philosophical approach. The nine moments of disequilibrium recognized by Murris are the following (Murris, 2008, pp. 677-681):

- a. "Selecting Starting Points for Enquiry when educators choose materials that give the right 'message', raise the 'right' theme or 'fit in' with current educational concerns". On the contrary, as the author highlights, starting points for enquiry need to be selected carefully for their power to express ambiguity, to produce puzzlement, or to evoke deep responses. In this case *trusting possibilities* help us to remember that there is never only one possible or right way to learn something; it opens us up to a plurality of paths and opportunities. Trusting in possibilities allows us to remain open to what emerges from the situation, from the text, even if it is not predictable a priori, without fearing its ambiguity;
- b. "*Translation when educators have difficulty in making sense of what members of a community of enquiry are saying*". In this occasion a willingness to experiment and play with new ideas demands philosophical steps from the known to the unknown, resisting the urge to 'translate' what is being said into the more familiar knowledge. In this case, *respecting diversity*, and seeking diversity, allows us to valorise different interpretations, narrating the richness of plurality as a fusion of new paths and new meanings;
- c. "Finding the 'Right' Question when educators learn to identify philosophical questions by looking at word use (e.g. why') or strategies that focus on the analysis of abstract concepts". Identifying abstract philosophical concepts and generating philosophical questions, cannot be reduced to a technique and it requires engagement with the history of philosophical ideas. In this case, having an open attitude to change allows one to counter the fixity of dogmas and assumptions; it allows the facilitator and the community to continuously work on themselves, learning to form and enrich themselves, thanks to the confrontation with the history of philosophical ideas but also welcoming stimuli and proposals that call them into question again;
- d. "Psychological and Philosophical Investigations when educators ask 'what are the author's intentions' or 'how does this make you feel?'". The disequilibrium caused by the tension between philosophical and psychological questions can offer educational opportunities. In this case, improvisation can support the creation of *a sense of community*, in which the psychological, or caring dimension, and

philosophical research dimension, are dynamically intertwined, without excluding each other. Working on the sense of community makes it possible to educate the sense of belonging to a collective, universal identity, in which emotions, difficulties, and individual experiences can be found in a human, community feeling;

- e. "Lack of Progress when educators are troubled by a lack of linear direction in the dialogue and express their uncertainty with remarks such as 'They are going round in circles' or 'They keep going off on a tangent'". Murris reminds us that a community of inquiry aims at a disequilibrium and that inquiries do often seem to go around in circles. In this case, improvisation comes into its own thanks to its *creative passion*, which makes it possible to leave room for creativity that allows you to find your way into horizons that were previously unknown, unimagined, and unthinkable, without fear;
- f. "Conceptual Enquiry when educators comment that we should start with the definition of a concept ('to get it over and done with') and urge this to be 'sorted' before the 'proper' discussion can begin". On the contrary, as Murris highlights, P4C is concerned with the interactional properties of a concept, each community's own assumptions and procedures can be questioned, and it requires an attitude of tentativeness, open-mindedness, non-dogmatism, and humility towards knowledge. In this case, improvisation supports us in basing our acting and thinking on attitudes of research, discovery, provocation, going beyond the margins, beyond the boundaries, cultivating an *exploratory attitude*;
- g. "Peace-Keeping When educators are fearful of the possibility that teachers or children might get upset and therefore try and avoid certain topics for enquiry". On the contrary, emotional disturbance can offer rich opportunities for the community to explore its values and procedures and to strengthen its practice. To balance the freedom of inquiry and the protection in education, working through improvisation on the sense of community, can create a "safe creativity environment" (Weinstein, 2016) in which no topic is a taboo, and together we can reason on and inhabit uncertainty;
- h. "Preparing for the Unexpected when educators seek explicit guidance with P4C lesson planning and preparation". As said before, and as Murris underlines, educators are used to a culture of schooling that prioritizes transmission and acquisition of knowledge, and this transmission is perceived as certainty. On the contrary, the pedagogical responsiveness and good questioning that P4C

requires, cannot be planned in advance. Also, in this case, the *exploratory attitude* developed by the facilitator and shared with the community can be the "preparation" that the philosophical dialogue needs. As Steve Lacy used to say, to improvise is to prepare, not to be prepared;

i. "Right and Wrong Answers, Freedom to Speak - when educators inform others that there are no right or wrong answers in P4C". As Murris stresses, it is true that P4C does aim to give equal opportunities, where every participant is a potential source of insight, it is not the case that 'anything goes' or is accepted uncritically. It is a matter of fact, that also in improvisation, *trusting the possibilities* does not mean that every chance is a good one, or that every choice is the needed one. Even in improvisational processes, facilitators and the community must learn to recognize the criteria to be able to progressively improve in philosophical inquiry and be able to embrace every research 'possibility' through the most coherent reasoning and argumentation procedures.

Developing exercises to (1) see plurality as a source of new paths and ways to discover and engage, training the art of "unlearning"; (2) exercises based on trust, trust in others, trust in the collective process, and alternatives; (3) exercises that nourish the sense of belonging and of collective responsibility; (4) exercises to counteract fixity and change oneself thoughts thanks to the others' proposals; (5) provocative exercises that expose participants to the unknown on a cognitive, communicative, affective and bodily level; (6) and exercises that develop fun and excitement about what happens, even if it is not already clear or meaningful, can support facilitators and also the Community of inquiry to face and inhabit uncertain or disequilibrium moments that happen during a Philosophy for Children's session. This way of sharing the experience and living it in a positive way on cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions, can support the development of a socially uncertain tolerance that can be later interiorized by every participant.

Free pedagogy and improvisation could support the process of liberation that falls under what Freire called radical pedagogy, freedom from certainty (Freire, 2014). In this improvisational perspective improvisers (as facilitators or as

14

a community of philosophical inquiry) deal with "uncertainty" with a certitude: things will begin in the here and now, and they "will" of course. So, just let it start, improvising and inquiring philosophically together and during the processes inhabit uncertainties together, as possibilities.

### references

- Alterhaug, B. (2010). Improvisation as Phenomenon and Tool for Communication, Interactive Action and Learning. In M. Santi (Ed.). *Improvisation between Technique and Spontaneity*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars; pp. 103-133.
- Babrow, A.S. (1992). Communication and Problematic Integration: Understanding Diverging Probability and Value, Ambiguity, Ambivalence, and Impossibility, *Communication Theory*, Volume 2, Issue 2, May 1992; pp. 95–130, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.1992.tb00031.x
- Barreneche, M., Santi, M. (2022). Philosophy for Children: una pratica del (dis)orientamento in comunità di indagine. *Studium Educationis*; XXIII; pp. 160-170.
- Barrett, F. (2013). *Disordine armonico: leadership e jazz*. Milano: EGEA.
- Brashers, D.E. (2001). Communication and uncertainty management. *Journal of Communication*, 51, pp. 477-497.

Brookfield, S.D. (2006). The Skillfull Teacher. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

- Felsman, P., Gunawardenac, S., Seifertc, C.M. (2020). Improv experience promotes divergent thinking, uncertainty tolerance, and affective well-being. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, vol. 35, pp. 1-14.
- Freire, P. (2014). *Pedagogia dell'autonomia: saperi necessari per la pratica educativa*. Torino: Gruppo Abele.
- Gershenson, C. (2013). Facing Complexity: Prediction VS Adaptation. In A. Massip-Bonet, A. Bastardas-Boada (Eds.). *Complexity Perspectives on Language, Communication and Society*. Understanding Complex System. Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer; pp. 3-14.
- Haynes, J. (2008). *Children as Philosophers. Learning through Enquiry and Dialogue in the Primary School,* 2nd edn. London, Routledge.
- Hillen, M.A, Gutheil, C. M., Strout, T.D., Smets, E.M.A., Han, P.K.J. (2017). Tolerance of uncertainty: Conceptual analysis, integrative model, and implications for healthcare. *Social Science & Medicine* (180); pp. 62-75.
- Kizel, A. (2021). The facilitator as self-liberator and enabler: ethical responsibility in communities of philosophical inquiry. *Childhood & philosophy*, n.17; pp.1–20.
- Kohan, W. O. (2014). La filosofia come paradosso. Apprendere e insegnare a partire da Socrate. Roma: Aracne.
- Mead, G.H. (1934). *Mind, self & society: from the standpoint of a social behaviorist.* Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press.
- Murris, K. (2008). Philosophy with Children, the Stingray and the Educative Value of Disequilibrium. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, Vol. 42, No. 3-4; pp. 667-685.
- Pask G. (1975). Conversation, Cognition and Learning. London: Elsevier.
- Peters, G. (2012). Certainty, Contingency, and Improvisation. *Critical Studies in Improvisation*, Vol. 8, n.2; pp. 1-8.
- Santi, M. (2006). Ragionare con il discorso: il pensiero argomentativo nelle discussioni in classe. Napoli: Liguori.

- Santi M. (2014). Epistemologia dell'inclusione? Un paradosso "speciale" per una sfida possibile. In L. D'Alonzo (Ed.). *Ontologia Special Education*. Lecce-Brescia: Pensa MultiMedia; pp. 13-32.
- Santi, M. (2016). Education as Jazz: A Framework to Escape the Monologue of Teaching and Learning. In M. Santi, E. Zorzi (Eds.). *Education as jazz. Interdisciplinary sketches on a new metaphor*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing; pp. 3-27.
- Santi, M., Zorzi, E. (2016) (Eds.). *Education as jazz. Interdisciplinary sketches on a new metaphor*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Taleb, N. (2014). Il cigno nero. Come l'improbabile governa la nostra vita. Milano: Il Saggiatore.
- Tauritz R. L. (2019). *Certain you're not sure? An inquiry into pedagogical strategies for teaching children how to manage uncertain knowledge about sustainability challenges.* [Doctoral dissertation, Edinburgh].
- Vygotskij, L. (1986). *Thought and language*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology press.
- Weinstein J. (2016). A Safe Creativity Environment. In M. Santi, & E. Zorzi (Eds.), Education as Jazz: Interdisciplinary Sketches on a New Metaphors, pp. 49-61.
- Wenger E. (2006). *Comunità di pratica. Apprendimento, significato e identità*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina.
- Yang, J. (2014). Free improvisation and the Uncertainty Principle, In (eds.). F. Schroeder, M. O. Aodha, *Soundweaving: Writing on Improvisation*. Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing; pp. 79-94.
- Zorzi, E., Camedda, D., Santi, M. (2019). Tra improvvisazione e inclusione: il profilo "polifonico" delle professionalità educative. *Italian Journal of Special Education for Inclusion*, v.7; pp. 91-100.
- Zorzi, E., Santi, M. (2020). Improvising Inquiry in the Community: The Teacher's profile. *Childhood & Philosophy*, vol. 16; pp.1-17.
- Zorzi, E., Santi, M. (2023). How to generate (educate) an inquiring-jazzing community: free and open suggestions from an international workshop (ICPIC 2022). *Childhood* & philosophy, rio de janeiro, v. 19, abr. 2023, pp. 01- 22.

## eleonora zorzi:

Fixed-Term Researcher (RTDa) at Dip. Fisppa (UNIPD). PhD in Pedagogical and Educational Sciences, her research focuses on didactics, improvisation, design, inclusion, and the role of the teacher as an improviser in inclusive contexts.

#### how to quote this article:

**APA**: Zorzi, E. (2025). Improvising in the community of philosophical inquiry: a way to learn to inhabit uncertainties. *childhood & philosophy*, 21, 1–16. 10.12957/childphilo.2025.89428

**ABNT**: ZORZI, Eleonora. Improvising in the community of philosophical inquiry: a way to learn to inhabit uncertainties. *childhood & philosophy*, v. 21, p. 1–16, 2025. Disponível em: \_\_\_\_\_. doi: 10.12957/childphilo.2025.89428.

## credits

- Acknowledgements: Not applicable.
- Financing: Not applicable.
- **Conflicts of interest:** The authors certify that they have no commercial or associative interest that represents a conflict of interest in relation to the manuscript.
- Ethical approval: Not applicable.
- Availability of data and material: Not applicable.
- Authors' contribution: Conceptualisation; Writing, revising and editing the text; Formal analysis; Research; Methodology; Resources; Validation: ZORZI, E.
- Image: Not applicable.
- **Preprint:** Not published in preprint repository.

## article submitted to the similarity system **Plagius**

submitted: 30.01.2025	approved: 21.03.2024	published: 29.03.2025
editor: walter omar kohan		11
reviewer 1: stefano oliverio	reviewer 2: alessandra cav	vallo