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dossier "philosophy with children across boundaries"

philosophy with children across boundaries

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abstract

The International Community of Philosophical Inquiry (ICPIC) has been organizing international conferences since its foundation in 1985. Those encounters put together several educators, philosophers and other practitioners committed to philosophical inquiry with children from different parts of the world. In August 2024 the International Federation of Philosophical Society - FISP held the 25th World Congress of Philosophy - WCP at University "La Sapienza" in Rome, Italy celebrating "Philosophy across Boundaries", including Philosophy with Children in the list of Sections contributing to reflection and discussion on the topic. It was a challenging opportunity for ICPIC to be involved in the event, sharing with the community the great occasion to meet in the frame of cosmopolitanism. The Dossier "philosophy with children across boundaries" includes papers presented by authors participating in these different instances, witnessing the quality of international research which ICPIC reached in its history, with a high engagement into academic inquiry and beyond. The aim of Section n.81 as well as the Dossier is double: to show how the theme of *children* as philosophical inquirers defiances the dominant metaphysics of childhood as chronological time or



psychological stage to be surpassed in the linear logic of power and development in adulthood, appropriating a *difference* place, or better a movement among the traditional philosophical fields.

keywords: world congress of philosophy; boundaries; dossier.

filosofia com crianças sem fronteiras

resumo

O International Community of Philosophical Inquiry (ICPIC) organiza conferências internacionais desde a sua fundação em 1985. Esses encontros reúnem vários educadores, filósofos e outros profissionais comprometidos com a investigação filosófica com crianças de diferentes partes do mundo. Em agosto de 2024, a Federação Internacional de Sociedades Filosóficas (FISP) realizou o 25º Congresso Mundial de Filosofia (WCP) na Universidade “La Sapienza”, em Roma, Itália, comemorando a “Filosofia além das fronteiras”, incluindo a Filosofia com Crianças na lista de seções que contribuiriam para a reflexão e discussão sobre o tema. Foi uma oportunidade desafiadora para o ICPIC se envolver no evento, compartilhando com a comunidade a grande ocasião de se reunir no âmbito do cosmopolitismo. O dossiê “Filosofia com Crianças além das fronteiras” inclui artigos apresentados por autores que participaram dessas diferentes instâncias, testemunhando a qualidade da pesquisa internacional que o ICPIC alcançou em sua história, com um alto envolvimento na investigação acadêmica e além. O objetivo da seção nº 81 bem como do dossiê é duplo: mostrar como o tema das crianças como pesquisadoras filosóficas desafia a metafísica dominante da infância — entendida como tempo cronológico ou estágio psicológico a ser superado na lógica linear do poder e do desenvolvimento no adultismo —, apropriando-se de um lugar diferente; ou melhor, de um movimento entre os campos filosóficos tradicionais.

palavras-chave: congresso mundial de filosofia; fronteiras; dossiê.

filosofía con niños sin fronteras

resumen

La “International Community of Philosophical Inquiry” (ICPIC) lleva organizando conferencias internacionales desde su fundación en 1985. Estos encuentros reúnen a varios educadores, filósofos y otros profesionales comprometidos con la investigación filosófica con niños de diferentes partes del mundo. En agosto de 2024, la Federación Internacional de Sociedades Filosóficas (FISP) celebró el 25º Congreso Mundial de Filosofía (WCP) en la Universidad «La Sapienza» de Roma, Italia, con el lema «Filosofía sin fronteras», incluyendo la Filosofía con Niños en la lista de secciones que contribuyeron a la reflexión y el debate sobre el tema. Para el ICPIC fue una oportunidad desafiante participar en el evento y compartir con la comunidad la gran ocasión de reunirse en el marco del cosmopolitismo. El dossier «Filosofía con niños más allá de las fronteras» incluye artículos presentados por autores que participaron en estas diferentes instancias, lo que da testimonio de la calidad de la investigación internacional que el ICPIC ha alcanzado a lo largo de su historia, con un alto compromiso con la investigación académica y más allá. El objetivo de la Sección n.º 81, así como del Dossier, es doble: mostrar cómo el tema de los niños como investigadores filosóficos desafía la metafísica dominante de la infancia como tiempo cronológico o etapa psicológica que debe superarse en la lógica lineal del poder y el desarrollo en el adultismo, apropiándose de un lugar diferente, o mejor dicho, de un movimiento entre los campos filosóficos tradicionales.

palabras clave: world congress of philosophy; fronteras; dossier.

philosophy with children across boundaries

introduction

The International Community of Philosophical Inquiry (ICPIC) has been organizing international conferences since its foundation in 1985. Those encounters put together several educators, philosophers and other practitioners committed to philosophical inquiry with children from different parts of the world., In August 2024 the International Federation of Philosophical Society – FISP held the 25th World Congress of Philosophy – WCP at University “La Sapienza” in Rome, Italy celebrating “Philosophy across Boundaries,” including Philosophy with Children in the list of Sections contributing to reflection and discussion on the topic. According to the plenary program of the Congress, it should reveal a shared attempt to embed theoretical reflections in the lived reality of our time. As highlighted in the welcome message by the WCP President, the aspirations of leading scholars of diverse backgrounds to discuss pressing ethical, social, and spiritual issues were reached: “they will challenge rigid disciplinary demarcations; and they will address urgent public concerns such as inequalities, cultural and gender diversity, sustainability, rights, and political transformations on a global scale. The design of the overall program is informed by an unrelenting commitment to diversity of all kinds” (Scarantino, 2024).

It was a challenging opportunity for ICPIC and the Executive Committee to be involved in the event, sharing with the community the great occasion to meet in the frame of cosmopolitanism. The response from members was equally great: more than hundreds of proposals were submitted, distinguishing the Section n.81 PwC in the WCP general program as one of the most successful and populated. In this case, papers, thematic sessions, panels, and round tables were celebrated during WCP as well as an ICPIC Pre-Meeting and Workshops at the University of Naples “Federico II” the days before WCP 2024. The Dossier “philosophy with children across boundaries” includes papers presented by authors participating in these different instances, witnessing the quality of international research which ICPIC reached in its history, with a high engagement into academic inquiry and beyond.

The aim of Section n.81 as well as the Dossier is double: to show how the theme of *children* as philosophical inquirers defiances the dominant metaphysics of

childhood as chronological time or psychological stage to be surpassed in the linear logic of power and development in adultism, appropriating a *difference* place, or better a movement among the traditional philosophical fields. In particular, considering children not only/just as bearers of abstract rights paternalistically defined on their heads instead by their own thinking is a big challenge which requires philosophers as educators “to be compromised”, as Freire pretended. Having a Section in the WCP on Philosophy *with* Children is an opportunity to compromise the traditional way to decline philosophy into different fields “of” something/one, proposing a conjunction as a generative possibility of reciprocal contamination and participation. Children as inquirers and thinkers can and should have the chance to contribute to a new “childlike” philosophy for a reparative future (Walker et al., 2024), participating in the construction of diverse meanings, values and landscapes, crossing the boundaries that became their mutilations and even graves in a world of wars for countries’ borders. Secondly but not least, the Dossier will offer to the P4wC community a rich repertoire of issues which would become nets of interest to be implemented for future projects and ventures about children's philosophical inquiries. The Dossier also offers a map of children exclusions from citizenship which concretely provokes the dominant idea of well-being and well-becoming of the current educational systems (Biggeri & Santi, 2012) which would be navigated in communities of philosophical inquiry. The involvement of ICPIIC in the focus of 2024 WCP was an effective opportunity to offer to an international audience an alternative framework and multiple perspectives to conceptualize “boundaries” in terms of barriers through metapractices of philosophical thinking with children. The Theme of “Philosophy Across Boundaries” assumes an hopeful meaning for the WCP organizers “after the onslaught of the pandemic which has gripped the world in the past years. It seems that all the isolation, invasion, physical or emotional, all the fear and trembling which have attacked all our lives on the global scale point to the timeliness of rethinking our different spheres of existence which need fresh and bold reflections. Our rules of thoughts, our norms of conduct, our familiar habitat of bodily existence, our lively imagination of the infinite are facing fierce new challenges which philosophy of all persuasions need to address” (Satha-Anand, 2024). The “inclusive togetherness” of the WCP appears

even more provocative and critical during this time of wars in which occupying border lands seems authorize a genocide. The issue of who should include whom emerges as a crucial opportunity for all of us to come together to different thinking and agency, to empathize and hopefully to understand each other better in such turbulent times

In Annabelle Bonnet's book, *La barbe ne fait pas le philosophe. Les femmes et la philosophie (1880-1948)* (CNRS Edition, 2022), the author analyzes the processes of excluding women from the study and teaching of philosophy in France. It is striking to note the similarity between the arguments used to justify the exclusion of women and those still used today to exclude children. In a sense, they are the same arguments to exclude anyone: a given subject is naturalized with several negative or absence categories, such as weak, immature, irrational and so on and, as a "logical consequence," it is excluded from where the opposite nature is required or at least desired. The real consequence is a historically rooted epistemic, intellectual and political process of exclusion, domination and guardianship. While there is no doubt that what is named as Western tradition of Philosophy is full of these kinds of practices, more and more resisting voices have emerged. For example, Tal Piterbraut-Merx (2024) emphasizes that feminist child centered studies contribute to de-naturalize and de-essentialize these fixed categories.

Is philosophy an excluding practice? The so-called Western philosophy seems to be so. A dominant voice of it, like Plato, explicitly excluded from his Academic those who did not have knowledge of geometry. And systematically Plato himself and many other voices try to justify the exclusion of many people from its practice. The arguments take different forms but they repeat themselves: a supposed sacred or privileged nature the lack of which renders some individuals "incapable of thinking" (based on their gender, age, social class, or origins), the moral danger of exposing them to critical thinking, the "good intention" of protecting groups of beings from what might corrupt them ("it's for your own good"); the lack or bad use of reason of individuals or groups due to their insane nature, and finally, the fear that philosophy itself would be "diminished" if they—despite all these warnings, barriers, locked doors, and blood-stained keys—dared to venture into its realm.

If the excluding dimension of philosophy seems to be a logical consequence when practiced in societies based on exclusion it is unacceptable when exclusion is no longer accepted as a basic principle of social constitution. As our contemporary societies are double discourse (they discursively deny exclusion while they materially nurture from it), the practice of philosophy can be a way of challenging and confronting it. This dossier offers several papers that aim to contribute to that philosophical, educational and political task. Some other papers present the practice of philosophy with children in different contexts or simply offer some research on some concrete aspect of that practice. As this is a multilingual set of papers, we mention each contribution in the language it is being published.

The Dossier is opened by Fournel and Dascălu "Thinking with perceptual skills in philosophy for and with children (p4wc)." This paper aims to integrate Betty Edwards's proposal of training perceptual skills, drama, and embodied learning to the practice and theory of the community of philosophical inquiry (CPI). More specifically it suggests Edward's method to enrich the treatment of philosophical problems in a CPI. Through this contribution, the authors aim for more relational and situational questioning that will emerge from the practice of philosophical inquiry.

Following this first article, María Concepción Rodríguez-Toro based at Universidad Metropolitana at Caracas offers, through "A philosophy with children for Venezuela" a critique of the elitist character that has marked philosophy since Plato's allegory of the cave. Rodríguez-Toro finds in Kant's *The Conflict of the Faculties* (1798), a new reinforcement of this character and shows how in the present reality of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela attempts are being made to enlarge the practice of philosophy to children as a way of forming the civic freedom of new generations in that country. The main aims of this tentative have to do with the reduction of inequalities and an education for peace and participatory democracy.

The text that follows is Martine Gasparov's "Giving a voice to those who don't have one: Montaigne and Rancière, for educational and philosophical emancipation," a kind of concrete manifesto in favor of the equality of power among teachers and students through an emancipatory practice that helps every student to build the skills she needs to put their intelligence to work. For Gasparov

teaching is political in that it is about creating conditions so that the not heard beings could speak and turn the classroom community of equals.

Sofia Boz in “Re-claiming childhood: embracing alternative time dimensions through philosophy for children” recreates a critique of what Paulo Freire has thoroughly described as a “banking model” of education, specifically in terms of the chronological dimension of time affirmed by that model and the concomitant denial of the present, which is precisely the time closer to experiences in childhood. Boz presents philosophy for children as a path to reconnect to the time of childhood, like a time machine that helps students and teachers to reconnect to themselves, each other, and the world.

Yukako Kado is the author of “Shaping inclusion: possibility of “community of inquiry” in people with intellectual disabilities.” The paper stresses the acknowledging of the social character of disability to foster philosophical dialogue with people who are attributed intellectual disabilities. The research, carried through a case study and ethnomethodology and conversation analysis in the Kobe University Program for Inclusion, shows the potentiality of inclusive research and the practice of communities of inquiry among people with intellectual disabilities.

Eleonora Zorzi, in “Improvising in the community of philosophical inquiry: a way to learn to inhabit uncertainty,” offers a theoretical essay to support the educational value of uncertainty. Precisely, according to Zorzi, uncertainty could be a sign of well-being both for individuals and communities. Inhabiting communities of philosophical inquiry through an improvisational practice provides the dispositions needed to experience uncertainty as an affirmative and not limiting dimension of a pedagogical life.

“Training preschool education students to listen philosophically to children” is a qualitative study by Sofia Nikolidaki that argues in favor of the importance of listening to little children when experiencing philosophy with them. Her study stresses the significance of teachers giving space for children’s self-regulation and the value of training teachers in a philosophical mode to achieve more philosophical teaching practices.

Cristina Toti, in “Fpn y el activismo social: comunidad de diálogo en apoyo a experimentaciones monetarias contemporáneas” focus on examining the

application of the philosophical community of inquiry in social and communitarian contexts specially in those of economic activism and monetary experimentation. Built from some experiential workshops, the paper explores the collective construction of meaning in economic and monetary contexts stressing concepts like collective subjectivity, internal sustainability of projects and participative formation. The paper defends those exercises as fostering democratic and participatory practices.

The following paper by Hye in Ji from South Korea is “Exploring the application of empirical research in philosophy for children: analysis of two case studies in caring thinking.” This paper aims to deal with empirical research: it analyzes some previous ones and carries its one empirical research on caring thinking. It both analyzes the results and problematizes some of its own results showing how important it is in the Philosophy for children world to carry both quantitative and qualitative empirical research on caring thinking.

Tuukka Tomperi, in “The trajectories of pedagogical philosophizing in Finland. Overcoming the institutional boundaries between education and philosophy” offers a study both historical and of the current traces of philosophizing with children in Finland. After examining the tension between a more general teaching in elementary school and a more disciplined one in high school he considers pedagogical philosophizing as key to a Deweyan educational reconstruction of philosophy for both elementary and high school. The text ends supporting the community of philosophical inquiry as a key element in teacher education.

Pedro Hernando Maldonado Castañeda, through “Justice without agents of justice: a critique of adultcentric and aporophobic narratives in liberal theories of justice” denounces how liberal theories of justice reproduce, in their assumptions, adultcentric and aporophobic narratives, like conditioning political autonomy to adulthood and naturalizing children’s marginalization and poverty. Adultcentrism and aporophobia both impoverish and disempower children to which the movement known as “childism” is proposed as an intellectual response that denaturalizes age-based hierarchies and recognizes *children* as full political subjects. Finally, the article proposes deconstructing adultcentric and aporophobic narratives through interdependence and pluriverse narratives.

Mohammad Reza Vaez Shahrestani explores, in “Kant’s common human understanding in the community of philosophical inquiry,” the intersections between the Prussian philosopher and the Community of Philosophical Inquiry (CPI). According to the author, CPI through critical reflection and ethical awareness contributes to achieving some of Kant’s educational ideals, like intellectual autonomy, perspective-taking, and systematic reasoning. By such educational practices CPI can also address contemporary challenges such as misinformation, political polarization, and civic disengagement.

Marie Froment focuses on students associated with Developmental Language Disorder (DLD) in “Adapting philosophical dialogue to support the epistemic agency of neurodivergent children: a focus on children with developmental language disorder.” As a school speech-language pathologist and philosophy facilitator, the author defends the importance of developing practices that offer DLD students the tools they need for their intellectual emancipation. Froment refuses the common prejudices and stereotypes against neurodivergent children and proposes the practice of “epistemic enablement” and of the community of philosophical inquiry after some conditions have been introduced in school.

Kazuki Tsuji, in “Developing new methods to assess community transformation through philosophical dialogue,” is interested in evaluating both individual and collective transformations provoked by philosophical dialogue, especially related to the practice of caring and critical thinking. It does so through students’ self-assessments and in that way contributes to the delicate field of assessing the outcomes of communities of philosophical inquiry.

Maria Miraglia contributes with “Philosophy for children as an educational tool to prevent and combat hate speech: a research intervention in an Italian school.” In this paper Miraglia argues that critical reflection might be not enough to confront hate speeches that reach adolescents through social media and, therefore, proposes the foster of caring thinking as essential to contrapose the language of hatred that nowadays goes across our societies. Through the practice of philosophy children might have the possibility of liberating themselves from stereotypes and prejudices.

In “Vers une convergence des luttes? Droits des femmes et des peuples autochtones” Cécile Housset argues in favor of those who have been excluded from philosophical discourse including women, the native and other figures submitted to hierarchical social orders. Housset argues that Philosophy has been highly elitist throughout its history and presents new voices like ecofeminism that in the last decades have claimed their philosophical place.

Mahsa Poost Foroush Fard and Amin Izadpanah’s paper “May I kindle a light? Sitting at a table with Hannah Arendt and philosophy for/with children in dark times builds” precisely on the conceptual work of this German philosopher to consider in which way the philosophy for/with children movement can politically support plurality and connectivity in controlling contexts. The study follows an autoethnographic approach to assess philosophical conversations with young adult Iranian female students during 2022 protests. It proposes two main tasks for P4wC facilitators: a) as “light-keeper” they foster thoughtfulness and hope, making it possible that philosophical dialogues take place; b) as “light-intensity manager” they equalize the needed freedom of inquiry with cultural and political pressures, preserving the life of the community.

Nadia Bélanger and Mathieu Gagnon in “L’inclusion de l’adolescente dans la pratique du dialogue philosophique” focus on the challenges adolescents feel to take part in philosophical dialogues in educational settings as well as the pedagogical conditions that can be created to facilitate their inclusion. In that sense, one basic condition is establishing a respectful climate where every person is not morally judged but valued in her singularity. Bélanger and Gagnon call for a different posture both from facilitators and reviewers and consider adolescents valid interlocutors that are equally capable not only of understanding their own experiences but also co-constructors of legitimate knowledge.

In the background of ableism which seems to define the shape and the scene of what matters in school, the relationship between philosophy and disability appears very provocative and even disruptive. In the paper “To meet each other, to know and grow, and to have a good time: insights from Swedish pupils with intellectual disabilities who participated in philosophical dialogues,” Anders Franklin also focuses on students with intellectual disabilities. The study was carried through philosophical sessions and interviews with a dozen of

participants, aged 13 to 15 years, attending a Swedish Compulsory School for students with Intellectual Disabilities. In the interviews the students express their need for cognitively stimulating activities, and for communication, social and decision-making skills. In the end, the text highlights the place of humor in philosophical dialogues with this specific community.

In the paper “Critical, creative, and caring thinking: community of practice in Sidney, Australia” Britta Jensen offers a contribution on the core topic of complex thinking presenting the frame of thinking as developed by Lipman and Sharp, showing how it is thriving, having been adapted and further developed in the Australian context. The influence due to the innovations of Splitter, Cam and others is highlighted, and applications and innovations continue to the present day. In particular, the paper provides an addendum to empirical works carried out on the field, highlighting a case study of a more recent joint initiative which situates this theory at the center of teaching, learning, and well-being for students in delivery of the Australian Curriculum in New South Wales (NSW). The aspiration is to establish a lighthouse school of community best practice showcasing a set of practices that arise from and are directly informed by the tradition spearheaded by Lipman and Sharp, enriching the possible declinations and alternatives of the original proposal and school practice.

Ali GreenwellHall and Darren Garside offer “A response to Ecclestone and Hayes’ critique of therapeutic education using the community of inquiry to bridge the divide between the therapeutic and the educational.” Starting with a problematization of the construct and partial view of education premised on the concept of the “diminished self,” the paper suggests that using the community of inquiry approach, as devised by Lipman and Sharp, far from creating anxious learners, introduces them to the relational challenges of interpersonal communication. The uncertainty dimension proper of philosophical engagement offers participants a space and opportunities to develop their independent and collaborative thinking and reasoning, thus becoming more confident and more resilient learners who are capable of engaging with uncertainties that surround them. The crucial theme of “agonistic inquiry” is also introduced, as a key aspect of an inquiry integrating the affectual as constitutive, where conflict relations are

not avoided, and where a safe consensus over ends and means is less valued as a feature of inquiry.

In the spirit of cosmopolitanism which inspires the Dossier, it is very evocative to close our trip across boundaries exploring primary school teachers' experiences of P4C in Greece, the place where the West tradition supposed philosophy was born. In this last paper the authors Areti Skavantzou, Mari Janikian and Remos Armaos in fact aspired to propose "Philosophy as a way forward." According to the results that emerged from an empirical study using mixed methods, the main conclusion seems promising both from students' and teachers' perspective: the enhancement of children's higher-order thinking skills, emotional well-being, and democratic skills were reported. Teachers were also challenged in managing the initial nervousness in navigating boundaries with children and classroom dynamics. Students were perceived to face challenges in question-formulation, staying on-topic, and self-expression. Finally, teachers expressed positive contributions of P4C in their professional development, fostering cross-curriculum skills, and teaching strategy transference.

In sum, what emerges from an overview of the contents and topics presented in the dossier is that, as any other social practice, philosophy is permeated by adultism, patriarchy, capacitism/ableism, racism and colonialism working hand in hand to block access to those discursive and non-discursive practices that could disrupt the mechanisms of their domination. Like philosophical bluebeards, their arguments—sometimes moral, religious, pseudo-scientific, or more explicitly ideological—aim to frighten anyone who dares to open the door to a universe deemed dangerous to their "identity," "mental health," or "morality." A "nature" attributed to "women," "children," "colored," "indigenous," "disabled" is fictionally constructed and essentialized to legitimate exclusion. If this practice is problematic in any discipline, it is even more repudiable in philosophy, a discipline that deals with thinking and thinking about thinking and therefore prominent in the constitution of subjectivity. This dossier might be read as a collection of texts in favor of a philosophical practice that aims to cooperate in the constitution of more truly non-excluding societies by exploring the conditions and discourses—both explicit and implicit—that support and reinforce these processes of exclusion. We also seek to highlight different

forms of resistance—through experientially philosophical communal inquiry—for those who have been or continue to be historically marginalized and rendered invisible.

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