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philosophy as children: practicing thought beyond the logic of maturity

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This manuscript offers a thoughtful and pertinent argument for ‘philosophizing as children’ as an epistemic posture that can disrupt the adultist foundations of Western/Eurocentric philosophical pedagogy. The author argues that ‘philosophy’ has historically privileged the autonomous, mature, self-sufficient adult as the ideal knower and that even reform movements such as Philosophy for Children (P4C) and Philosophy with Children ultimately retain adultist structures of authority. The manuscript proposes ‘philosophy as children’ as an alternative orientation grounded in curiosity, relationality, dependence, and openness by drawing on phenomenology, ethics of care, decolonial thought, and childism. It illustrates this stance through examples from children’s literature and film. It concludes by suggesting that such a posture transforms not only philosophical method but also philosophy’s disciplinary self-understanding.

The manuscript is clearly written, well-structured, and makes a timely contribution to ongoing conversations in philosophy of childhood, childism, P4C, phenomenology, and decolonial critique. The intervention is creative and compelling, and the author brings together important strands of scholarship in a productive way.

At the same time, the manuscript would benefit from several clarifications and expansions that would make the conceptual architecture sharper and the contribution more fully situated within existing scholarship they align with. These comments are intended to strengthen the manuscript, not detract from its merit.

1. clarifying which ‘philosophy’ to avoiding an unintended monolithic definition

The manuscript repeatedly refers to “philosophy” as if it is a unified tradition that defines itself through adultism. While the overall argument is strong, this usage risks unintentionally reproducing a monolithic and Eurocentric conception of philo-sophy (coming from Greek love of knowledge).

Because the argument aligns with decolonial ethics it is particularly important to explicitly recognise ‘doing philosophy’ is a cultural and diverse construct. And clarify: whether this analysis explicitly about a specific Western/Eurocentric/modern philosophy, with its historical and pedagogical emphasis on autonomy, maturity, and independence? How might non-Western,

Indigenous, or relational philosophical traditions complicate or enrich the adultism critique?

Specifying this prevents universalizing the claim and aligns the argument more fully with its decolonial commitments.

2. strengthening the dialogue with existing childist scholarship

The critique of P4C as remaining within adultist structures is well presented and developed in dialogue with childism as discussed by Biswas et al. 2023. However, the argument leaves out relevant contributions by the cited authors to childist literature. For example, in Biswas (2020 and 2021) begins her childist project by critically engaging with adultist and colonial tendency's in P4C's historicity, and proposes *philosophy with (hos/bei) children* and related pedagogical concepts like 'learning from' and 'letting teach' as methodological alternatives that reshape adult-child philosophical relations. In doing so Biswas suggests that childism understands philosophy itself as play – not as an activity but an ontological condition as suggested by Wall 2013.

The author might explicitly outline: How does *philosophy as children* relate to or depart from: *philosophy with (hos/bei) children* and related the childist concepts of 'learning from' and 'letting teach'? Does the proposed epistemic posture build upon these earlier critiques, revise them, or situate itself alongside them as a distinct approach?

Including this dialogue will position the manuscript more accurately in relation to childist perspectives which it evokes as a key part of its conceptual construction.

an additional remark on the reference to childism and decoloniality: On pg. 14, the author writes: “The companion volume *Childism and Decoloniality* (2023) extends this argument by linking epistemic justice for children to decolonial thought.”

The reference is not clear and possibly misrepresented. If it refers to the colloquium *Childism and Decoloniality*, 'companion volume' should be 'colloquium' and the reference to the published recording should be included in the reference list. It would also be useful to add a sentence explaining how the colloquium –

specifically who in the colloquium – linked childism to decoloniality as relevant for the concept of ‘philosophy as children’.

3. clarifying that ‘philosophy as children’ is an epistemic posture enacted by adults

The manuscript occasionally risks conflating: childhood as lived experience, and childlikeness as an epistemic metaphor or stance adopted by adults. It would be helpful to clarify explicitly that: “Philosophy as children” is something adults do. The childlike stance can be derived from adult-created representations, not from actual engagement with children. This aligns strongly with Gunilla Halden and Hanne Warming’s distinction between: *children’s perspectives* (children’s own meaning-making), and *the child perspective* (adult-constructed positions to study/understanding society from the point of view of childhood). Hanne Warming’s *child prism*, and Erica Burman’s *child as method* might also be relevant.

This clarification would enhance conceptual precision and prevent unintentional slippage between metaphor and lived experience—especially important when working with/in childist frameworks.

4. extending the discussion of how the proposed posture transforms ‘philosophy’ itself

The manuscript argues that practicing ‘philosophy as children’ requires shifts in methods, aesthetics, and relational practices. I agree with this, and see an opportunity to strengthen the claim by explicitly engaging e.g., Wall (2013), Biswas (2020; 2021), Belisario and Biswas (2025) childist conception of philosophy as play in addition to María Lugones’s. The understanding of play (as *brincar*) being a foundation for decolonial childism might especially be relevant for the author’s argument construction.

The author cites Biswas et al 2023. In this article, Toby Rollo’s contribution specifically addresses the question: what will be left of philosophy if we overcome adultism? This part of the text is directly connected to a key moment in the author’s argument construction.

Engaging with these related contributions can deepen the argument that ‘philosophy as children’ is a posture that opens way for the transformation of (Euro-centric) philosophy’s self-understanding.

5. distinguishing adult-created children’s literature/film from children’s own cultural production

The aesthetic examples (The Little Prince, Matilda, Inside Out, Spirited Away) work well to illustrate aspects of the childlike epistemic posture. However, it is important to explicitly acknowledge that: these are adult-produced representations of childhood, not expressions originating from children themselves. This distinction matters for childist analysis and avoids conflating: ‘childlike imagination,’ ‘adult imagination of the child,’ and ‘children’s own ways of seeing or expressing.’

Relevant scholarship to incorporate in this part of the argument is: Deszcz-Tryhubczak & García González (2022) on childism in children’s literature studies. And more importantly, Peter Hunt’s concept of “childist criticism”, which is a *reading as a child* approach that differs from the philosophical childism which the author refers to.

The author might consider that their proposal of ‘philosophy as children’ falls somewhere between Biswas’ philosophy with (hos/bei) children and Hunt’s concept of childist criticism/adults reading as a child.