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Philosophy for Children as *Listening*
Avoiding Pitfalls of Instrumentalization**Abstract**

Since its inception in the seventies, philosophy for children (P4C) curricula have been under attack from various sides. As Maughn Gregory points out in his paper dealing with various criticisms, P4C attracted “overlapping and conflicting criticism” from religious and social conservatives to educational psychologists, philosophers, and critical theorists (Gregory 2011, 199). Conservative criticism of P4C often goes against the grain of philosophy and liberal education in general and can probably be seen as an age-old dispute constantly resurfacing against the effort of philosophers, while psychologists’ arguments that philosophical thinking is beyond children of certain age are today easily refuted by the work of Kieran Egan (2002) and Alison Gopnik (2009). Critical theorists’ critique, however, seems to go deeper than all other criticisms by raising intellectually pertinent problem of philosophy education: that instead of fulfilling its promise of liberating subjects it in fact interpellates them into free market ideology. As Gert Biesta (2011) tries to show, P4C curricula “are supposed to develop a range of skills, including cognitive and thinking skills, moral and social skills, and democratic skills” (Ibid. 310) and thereby instrumentalize philosophy in order to achieve a certain goal, a dubious and alarming undertaking that “can be characterized as ideological” (Ibid. 309). In order for P4C to tackle this problem of instrumentalization of philosophy (raised also in Vansieleghem (2005)) the present paper suggests that P4C curricula should be seen (and in certain cases reformed) as promoting a Socratic dialogue with children, whereby the emphasis lies on listening to a child and giving her a voice, and not on “teaching skills”. This paper thus argues that it is precisely through philosophical dialogue that a child can be heard as a child, since such a dialogue intrinsically presupposes recognition of the conversational partner as an equal interlocutor. P4C curricula can thus be regarded as an important part of emerging field of “Pedagogy of Listening” (cf. Rinaldi 2001).

Keywords

philosophy for children, criticism, instrumentalization, ideology, Socratic dialogue, pedagogy of listening

I. Introduction

Main point behind this paper is the following: when thinking about the aim of the practice known as *philosophy for children* (from now on abbreviated as “P4C”), one should not focus so much on *what it can achieve*, that is what kinds of skills it helps developing in children (for instance “critical thinking”, “social responsibility”, “reading skills”, etc.), but on *why is it right to give children the opportunity to do philosophy*. To put it in other words: the paper suggests that in trying to justify P4C one should shift the debate from “why is it good” to “why is it right”; one should change the P4C discourse from an

instrumental one to a moral, or even legal, consideration which emphasizes the right of a child to be heard and appreciated as a human being.

The thesis, presented in this form, raises some questions: firstly, why should one change the discourse about justification in this way? – We are trying to tackle this question in the first section where it will also become clear that the discourse reformulated in such a way enables P4C practitioners to avoid certain serious critiques that were raised during last decades. Secondly: isn't such reformulation only playing with words whereby the practice itself remains unchanged? That is, isn't such change of terrain only symbolic, meant only as an intellectual manoeuvre to avoid some theoretical objections, not really dealing with the outcomes and curricula of P4C? – We will try to answer this question in the second section where we will also try to show that, on the contrary, the suggested change of the discourse brings with it a substantial change in our understanding of what the practice can be about and, consequently, what it should be like. Most importantly, we will briefly try to show in this section that the practice of philosophy (philosophical dialogue, for instance) is, on the one hand, best way to give someone her voice and enable her to recognize it, and on the other hand that the philosophical practice (including contemplative and exegetical practices) allows people to be informed about wider variety of communication possibilities (which is another right a subject of postmodern societies should bear, often neglected because of the mainstream media pressure). Thirdly: what should P4C enthusiasts and practitioners get from such a reformulation of the discourse? – we will briefly touch on this question in the conclusion, where we will point out that such reformulation could give P4C practitioners a tool with which to negotiate for more space and opportunities in public school curricula.

II. P4C and its critiques

Since its beginnings, the aim of P4C was viewed predominantly in terms of “improving children’s judgment” (Lipman in Gregory 2011, 200). Indeed, Matthew Lipman, the well-known founder of Institute of the Advancement of Philosophy for Children at Montclair State University and one of the P4C founders, sees the role of education, conceived as inquiry, in “the transmission of knowledge and the cultivation of wisdom” (Lipman 1988, 38), whereby wisdom is understood to be “characteristic outcome of good judgment and good judgment ... [is] the characteristic of critical thinking.” (Ibid.) It’s true that this idea in itself does not exclude critical thinking about “aspects of experience that have ethical, or aesthetic, or political, or logical or even maybe metaphysical meaning” (Gregory 2011, 200), that is, one is not justified to say that it narrows philosophical investigating down to pure logics. On the contrary, P4C conceived in this way wants to equip young people with critical thinking skills in order to enhance the quality of all aspects of their lives, making their experience “more just, more free, more beautiful, or what have you.” (Ibid.) However, precisely this orientation proved out to be problematic for a number of philosophers: their main objection is the fear of instrumentalizing philosophy, which “can be characterized as *ideological*” (Biesta 2011, 309). And so the established practice of P4C with its emphasis on “critical thinking and dialogue”, which professes to be “value-neutral” and “objective”, turns out to be an “oppressive” practice.

But before turning to this quite serious objection (its seriousness is also indicated by a number practitioners that try to respond to it), let’s first briefly

consider two other critiques of the idea of P4C. The first one is connected with conservatism, and the second with developmental psychologists.

Perhaps the most ideological of all objections against P4C is the one brought forth by conservative critics who are convinced that philosophy may spoil their children's minds in roughly the same way Socrates was accused of corrupting the youth. We can even find some parents that are prepared to say to P4C practitioners that "No one should talk to my children about right and wrong, or about death, but me" (Gregory 2011, 202). Practically all practitioners disagree with this objection since it's against the grain of the very essence of philosophy. But this, of course, does not mean that it should not be taken seriously. In fact, it can be quite destroying and prevent greater inclusion of the practice into curricula, especially in countries with conservatively oriented political agendas and social climate. Nonetheless, it's precisely that external type of critique – perhaps the only one – that cannot be addressed and discussed solely internally within philosophy, since it questions its *raison d'être* in general: no argument that philosophers can produce against it will do, since the strategy of giving philosophical reasons is rejected by its proponents *in toto*. Perhaps the only way to counter this criticism externally is to point to the *right* people have for engaging in philosophy, and for free speech in general. For P4C's case this could be done by pointing to children's right to be introduced to philosophical dialogue. This is, of course, the point we want to make in this paper.

Developmental psychologists' critique is theoretically more sustainable but equally problematic: it too can prevent bigger presence of P4C in school and preschool curricula. It's main point is that children before young adolescence – before the age of 11 or 12 – lack the ability of abstract thought and are not capable of sustained philosophical dialogue and reflection. However, the arguments that philosophical thinking is beyond children of certain age are today easily refuted by the work of Kieran Egan (2002) and Alison Gopnik (2009). As Egan shows, understanding of concepts (such as "good", or "number") that children learn very early presupposes abstract thought. And one could even say the ability to understand symbols in general is abstract skill *par excellence*. Seen in this way children would then be appropriate conversation partners in an abstract dialogue, since dialogue *per se* is already an abstract undertaking. Here, then, one should make a difference between abstract thinking and the ability of prolonged attention to detailed logical analysis which indeed occurs later in life.

One feels, however, that saying something like this might be too quick: it could be that all thinking is by nature abstract, but that does not also mean that as soon as one starts to speak one can do philosophy. Are children then capable of philosophy or not? Perhaps one strategy of tackling this question would be to point out that the answer depends on the concept of "philosophy" one has here in mind. If by it one means academic discipline that demands understanding of complex arguments in Kant or Hegel, then the answer would be a clear "No". But if philosophy is understood more broadly as a practice of open conversation that tries to provide reasons for one's ideas, or that tries to examine oneself and one's understanding through a dialogue with another person, then the answer may well be "Yes". Perhaps the work of Gareth Matthews – especially his critique of Jean Piaget's ideas that were so influential in developmental psychology – is illuminating in this point: in fourth chapter of his *Philosophy and the Young Child* (Matthews 1982), dealing with Piaget, Matthews convincingly shows that precisely those answers, produced by chil-

dren, that adults (someone like Piaget, for instance) might comprehend as “wrong answers” (since they deviate from “normal understanding”), exhibit genuine thoughtful effort and thus indicate presence of reflection on a topic (whereas “correct” answers can, on the contrary, be seen as acquired and thus cannot be taken as a result of genuine reflection). Matthews thus concludes that prejudice of adults and experts – prejudice about what children are capable of and what counts as an abstract reflection – can be the root cause of P4C’s dismissal, whereby one entirely misses the point of the nature of child’s answers. But since, as mentioned, more and more researchers are nowadays willing to attest the existence of child’s remarkable and until recently overlooked intellectual abilities, one might feel that this critique of P4C will soon be considered outdated and irrelevant: children are increasingly being viewed as possessing surprising skills of metaphorical and imaginative understanding (cf. Gopnik 2009), which should only be further developed. And here P4C can jump in and handily fulfill a gap in our innovative pedagogical processes.

This is, however, precisely the point where “instrumentalization” critique emerges. According to serious work of a variety of schools and researchers, including notable figures from philosophy such as Luis Althusser or Michel Foucault, education is ideological precisely in the point where it starts “developing skills” and “shaping our characters”. In fact, this practice can be seen as something that contributes to the “reproduction” of the existing (unjust) world order, thus preserving privileges of the elite. If the aim of education is to “produce citizens”, then its goal can be seen as an oppressive totalitarian practice of “reproduction of production force”. If the goal of P4C is “developing judgment” and “critical thinking skills”, then the *philosophy* for children is by its own standards incoherent. If P4C is to be “philosophy” in proper sense, then it has to be either reformed so as to become a liberating practice, or dismissed as a harmful and even dangerous idea.

A number of authors generally in favor of P4C practice have touched upon this problem. We are only briefly examining three of them: in a paper that interestingly argues for “exposure” as a “guiding educational concept”, Gert Biesta tries to show that “the educational engagement with philosophy tends to model itself on a rational-epistemological interpretation of the community of scientific enquiry”, which is “visible in its focus on the development of thinking skills”, (Biesta 2011, 308) and points out that such conception represents “the practice of science predominantly in epistemological and procedural terms and, in this regard, can be characterized as *ideological* not in the least because there are radically different accounts of how we should understand the ‘practice and culture’ of the society, including ones that say that epistemology and rational procedure are the least helpful in making sense of science.” (Ibid., 309)

Nancy Vansieleghem expresses similar concerns by explaining “that philosophy for children is based on the assumption that critical thinking and dialogue are the necessary conditions for the transformation of children into democratic, free citizens who can think for themselves” (Vansieleghem 2005, 24). Here, however, one should call the meaning of “critical thinking and dialogue” in P4C in question, since it only “reinstates the problem of exclusion”, (Ibid.) whereby “Philosophy for children, with its emphasis on critical thinking and autonomy, is nothing more than the reproduction of an existing discourse.” (Ibid., 25)

“The autonomy that the child gains through Philosophy for Children by critical thinking and dialogue is”, namely, “nothing more than the freedom to occupy a pre-constituted place in that discourse.” (Ibid.)

In his wonderful exposition of a whole range of P4C critics, written in the form of a dialogue, Maughn Gregory similarly mentions the oppressiveness problem: “Critical theorists are concerned with how cultural practices that presume to be morally and politically neutral, are in fact oppressive.” (Gregory 2011, 203) The point of the critique, as he reconstructs it, is in the fact that

“... if our consciousness has not been raised to recognize the system of oppression we live with, critical thinking could end up being just a tool we use to chase after desires that have been manipulated by our patriarchal home lives and the capitalist media and so on. Or worse: if we get some power we might use our critical thinking to oppress others.” (Ibid. 204)

These, he says in the dialogue with the words of a character named *Rosario*, “are well-founded suspicions.” (Ibid.)

While Biesta turns to Levinasian “exposure”, and Vansieleghem to “preserving newness” with Hannah Arendt (with an insight that “Thinking arises as the response to the encounter that is not to be anticipated or predicted or even perhaps believed” (Vansieleghem 2005, 28)), Gregory tries to show that too much skepticism regarding P4C – considering the practice oppressive even if it includes ethical and political considerations – can be self-defeating. The fact that P4C is *not value-neutral* is to be welcomed: it *has to be biased* if it wants to prepare children to deal critically with social dogmas and established norms and *oppose* them:

“We are committed to procedures of inquiry, and practices of political and ethical interdependence that we take to be normative; and, as we said, to the aim of practical wisdom, or better ways to live.” (Gregory 2011, 206)

This should be so because we can see that “these aims and these procedural norms” served us well in the past.

One can, however, quickly see that this is not the best strategy for Gregory in his otherwise clever and wonderful exposition. For critical theorists want to point out precisely this sort of thinking as an ideological illusion: one can think that they would quickly come up with an argument that the critical thought and procedural norms he advocates *did not serve us well in the past, and that they do not do that now either*. A judgment like this, a critical theorist might argue, is passed from an ideological point of view, itself being an ideological reconstruction of “the past”, reproducing the past of the period from the Enlightenment to the present days that saw millions enslaved and oppressed. It is, we believe, precisely in this point that one runs into *cul-de-sac* in the P4C debate. The problem is that while Biesta’s and Vansieleghem’s ideas about “exposure” and “preserving newness” seem to be too vague in order to help us construct a sound P4C curriculum, Gregory’s exposition does not seem to be immune to “critical theorist’s” objection.

This is precisely why we propose that one thinks of P4C in terms of children’s rights instead of its professed aims. For as soon as one enters the “aims debate”, one runs into the problem of “aims that are oppressive” and aims that only enable us to “chase after desires that are manipulated by our patriarchal home lives”, *even if* they declare to be emancipatory (“critical theorists” are namely quick to point out that the spot for so called “emancipatory practices” is already ideologically presupposed in advance, and thus a part of the very ideology it wants to combat – just like “critical thinking”). If the debate is reformulated in such a way that people – in our case children – have a *right* to participate in a discussion, and a *right to voice their opinion and be heard*, then the “aims debate” simply loses its relevance: engaging in P4C does not

have any other aim except to engage us in a dialogue with children about topics that can be seen as philosophical. The reason why one should do that is, as we are trying to briefly show in the next section, the fact that philosophical discussion is a place of equality, a place where conversational partners must by definition accept each other as *equal*. It presupposes taking thoughts expressed by partners with seriousness; it presupposes *listening* to them. By this it does not only enable them to voice their opinions (they might, actually, have none), but also helps them to seek their own voice. In this case it should less be seen as *teaching* and more as *conversing*. Not *talking to* them but *talking with* them. Or, as Vansieleghem puts it:

“After all, does not the community of inquiry always imply thinking *with* the other, facing conflict *with* the other, searching for an answer *with* the other, doubting *with* the other...?” (Vansieleghem 2005, 33)

III. The right to participate in philosophical conversation – the right to be heard

However, if one changes the P4C debate from “aims debate” into “rights discourse”, does this in any way change its practice? Isn’t that just a thought-manoeuvre that does not really have any consequences? As one can already infer from the debate above, the change in the curriculum has to occur if the instrumentalization/ideology objection is taken seriously and if one wants to follow through all the consequences of the P4C “aims debate”. In fact, it already has, as through the forty years of discussion:

“The early emphasis on critical thinking has been transformed by theorists who see the community of philosophical inquiry as a political laboratory, a method of wisdom training, an operational application of social learning theory, a means of raising philosophical questions across the school subjects, a method of religious exegesis and education, and even a contemplative and spiritual practice.” (Gregory 2011, 212).

Nonetheless, one can think of a further change in P4C practice if “rights idea” is taken seriously: the practice could be reevaluated in such a way that what it can help children to achieve would start mattering less, while what children have to say would start mattering more. That is: the point is precisely that one should not expect too much from P4C, since it’s not even its aim that is important, but only offer it to children because they have the right for it; because they can be *heard* through it; for one of the main advantages of a philosophical dialogue is that one can, as Socrates said, “examine” oneself through it, and by that also share herself with others while also simultaneously listening to them. In fact, if philosophy is understood as nothing else but a continuous conversation about ourselves (as perhaps Richard Rorty would see it), then children, as well as adults and everybody else, should at least have a right to decide whether to participate in it or not. We should start listening to individual children without expecting anything in return. This, at last, is also what the article 12 of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* obliges us to do, and it would also be in line with the emerging field of “Pedagogy of Listening” (cf. Rinaldi 2001).

On the other hand, exposing children to philosophy also materializes their right to be acquainted with *different forms of discourse, and different possibilities of exchange of ideas*. This latter point seems to me to be especially important in a society bombarded by mass media, concentrating on more or less uniform and monotonous communication strategy: by exposing them to multimedia contents and by – more and more so – engaging them in interacti-

ve pre-set communication tools. One can hardly expect those methods to “preserve newness”, if they are pre-programmed and pre-thought by the developers (of course not *all* mobile apps or multimedia learning tools are like that). Perhaps what we mean here is best illustrated by a practical example from my own P4C practice, where the corresponding author of the present paper noticed that preschool education students and their mentors were genuinely surprised when they saw children interested in a story (in most cases (more than 150 instances) it was “The Giving Tree” by Shel Silverstein) with “only black-and-white illustrations” and with its plot quite “unlike” what they “normally” hear. One teacher with over 12 years of experience with preschool children supposedly even said that she “was surprised and would never think that children will be interested in it and capable of something like that”, referring to the story and the conversation that ensued.

Nevertheless, one issue still remains for P4C if its understanding is transformed through the “rights debate”: if its main goal should be *listening to what children have to say*, then this may *not be enough* to construe a P4C curriculum. In other words: the ideas about “exposure”, “preserving newness”, or even “listening to a child” may appear too vague. For the problem is precisely *how* one should listen to children, and in what educational, or pedagogical, circumstance? The curriculum question does, at the end, boil down to a quite practical problem: what kind of material should we put in hands of those that practice P4C? And how should we advise them to approach children? It’s almost impossible to conceive of P4C without the stories that are read, or without movies or animations that are viewed, and especially without a discussion that follows. And how should one do that if not “critically”, if not by examining what, and how, we think?

The change of the curriculum then seems to be more in the attitude and expectations of P4C practitioners than in the contents about which we all agree that they should be “emancipatory” and not intended solely for “developing critical thinking skills”. When it comes to the attitude, one should – bearing in mind the “rights argument” – necessarily and unconditionally insist on the fact that the practitioner should not be viewed as a “teacher”, if by that we mean “someone who wants to transfer knowledge”. Rather, the practitioner should be a conversation partner, and she should genuinely believe that something new can be heard from children; that it is not only her that can inform children but that children can, and undoubtedly will, also inform her by shocking her with their answers and viewpoints. However, the practitioner should also be modest and be prepared that some simply will not be interested, that maybe some – or sometimes even the majority of children – will not be up for a conversation, and that that’s ok too. As said: with P4C curricula we should primarily give children the opportunity to participate in conversation and examine themselves, us, and our society, and not demand from them that they necessarily learn something. This is also a reason why one should, again unconditionally, insist on P4C practice that remains unconstrained by relatively fixed expectations of educational policies, and consequently remains relatively unstructured. This latter point should be taken in a quite literal, material sense: one should not, we believe, structure the curriculum too tightly, or prepare for an hour of P4C too thoroughly. For by doing this one may start forcing one’s own preconceptions on others, and actively loosing what’s most precious in the program: unpredictability of our course of thought. One should, instead, focus on oneself and one’s ability to listen as a practitioner.

This does not mean that no preparation whatsoever is necessary for a P4C class. On the contrary: the practice demands a whole person; someone who is

able to detect various meanings in often seemingly “meaningless” ideas. As a practitioner one should, we suppose, incessantly think about different material that could be appropriate as a starting point for a possible conversation. But in addition to that the practitioner also has to think a lot about the answers, both those that may and those that did appear. For, strictly speaking, conversations do not end when we stop talking; they can go on for years after partners engaged in a conversation; and sometimes they only really begin when we stop speaking and start thinking while going our own ways. They can live in our memories as constant inspiration, or sometimes as a bitter reminder. Next, we believe, there are some guidelines for the material (for instance stories) to be chosen for a P4C practice: the corresponding author’s own advice to students in the classroom is that they should only choose those stories that feature ambiguous characters and situations; they are asked to pick stories that present them with problems. For if stories do not make us think they probably will not make children think either. Moreover, ambiguousness and uncertainty is also a recipe for avoiding indoctrination and instrumentalization, since it provokes thought and since it is hard to conceive that one could instrumentalize something that is ambiguous (or indoctrinate someone into an uncertain practice). The P4C practice is, then, significantly transformed if one thinks about it in terms of listening and not of teaching. It becomes a different kind of “curriculum”.

IV. Conclusion

We are aware that ideas presented here may sound too risky to many educators, especially those who think that the classes should be well structured and preplanned, or to those teachers that do not feel too comfortable “improvising” in the class. One answer to this concern is that P4C practitioners should be well advised before engaging in the practice. Second answer to such a concern should be that it is simply worth the risk. P4C curricula do not exactly attempt to take over the entire school space, so we are not talking about a too radical, sudden change of existing programs. But again: we should remind ourselves here that engaging in philosophical dialogue should be a right to which children are entitled. A right to being heard and listened to which is, as already pointed out, guaranteed by the convention.

This argument, we believe, is something P4C practitioners can use when advocating their practice of doing philosophy with children, and something that should be presented to educational policy makers. Slovenian national professional document for preschool education, titled *Kurikulum za vrtce* (Curriculum for Kindergartens), composed in 1999 by educational professionals and ratified by Professional Council of the Republic of Slovenia for General Education, explicitly touches upon “the principle of active learning and guaranteeing the possibility of verbalization and other manners of expression” (Curriculum 1999, 9) for children as a guideline that should contribute to the realization of the Curriculum’s main goals. P4C as presented here could thus be seen as one of the most important practices that can make possible precisely that what the Convention and Curricula similar to the Slovenian one say is necessary: listening to what children have to say. The same idea is noticed by Gregory:

“A lot of work has been done by feminists and others who see the community of inquiry in P4C as a method of critical pedagogy, because of how it distributes power and brackets the teacher’s content expertise; and also how it nurtures timid voices and brings traditionally marginalized

voices forward; how it makes adults take children's ideas and perspectives seriously, and how it works by collaboration." (Gregory 2011, 204)

One should, informed by critical theorists' work, perhaps add that it is vital not to expect anything in advance, or to strive to achieve an aim by that. It is much more important to just open up possibilities, expect nothing in return, and then be surprised.

Shifting the P4C debate from "aims" to "rights" has another advantage for practitioners: as we pointed out above, perhaps the most dangerous critique of P4C curricula stems from conservatively oriented population: "some parents don't want their children to question, or even to think critically about religious or political beliefs that parents teach them." (Gregory 2011, 206). The main fear is, as we have seen, that philosophy might "corrupt the youth" by teaching them lessons about God, life after death, justice and equality, etc. that do not coincide with conservative agenda. This argument is especially hard to take and tackle, since it goes against the grain of philosophy and since philosophical arguments against it will be rejected *ab initio*. However, by shifting the debate from "aims" to "rights" practitioners could say that, again, P4C does not want to teach children anything fixed and that, on the other hand, their right to be a part of P4C curricula is guaranteed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by every member state of the United Nations, except Somalia (which now seriously considers ratifying it) and the United States.

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Filozofija za djecu kao slušanje

Izbjegavanje zamki instrumentalizacije

Sažetak

Od zasnivanja u 70-im godinama 20. stoljeća, kurikulum filozofije za djecu bio je napadnut s raznih strana. Kao što Maughn Gregory ističe u njegovom članku o tim kritikama, filozofija za djecu privukla je »preklapajuće i proturječne kritike« od religijskih i društvenih konzervativaca do edukacijskih psihologa, filozofa i kritičkih teoretičara (Gregory 2011, 199). Konzervativna kritika filozofije za djecu često ide protiv struje filozofije i liberalnog obrazovanja općenito te se može promatrati kao stari spor koji se konstantno pojavljuje unatoč naporu filozofa, dok se argumenti psihologa da filozofijsko mišljenje nije moguće kod djece određene dobi danas lako pobijaju istraživanjima Kierana Egana (2002) i Alison Gopnik (2009). S druge strane, čini se da kritika kritičkih teoretičara seže dublje nego druge jer razmatra intelektualno relevantan problem filozofskog obrazovanja: umjesto da ispuni svoje obećanje da će osloboditi subjekte, ustvari ih interpelira u ideologiju slobodnog tržišta. Kao što Gert Biesta nastoji pokazati, kurikulum filozofije za djecu »trebaju razviti spektar vještina, uključujući kognitivne vještine i vještine mišljenja, moralne i društvene vještine te demokratske vještine« (Biesta 2011, 310) te na taj način instrumentaliziraju filozofiju da bi postigli određeni cilj, što je dvojben i alarmantan pothvat koji se »može okarakterizirati kao ideološki« (ibid., 309). Da bi se uhvatilo u koštac s problemom instrumentalizacije filozofije (o čemu raspravlja i Vansieleghem (2005)), ovaj rad sugerira da kurikuli filozofije za djecu trebaju promovirati sokratski dijalog s djecom (te u nekim slučajevima biti reformirani u tom smjeru), gdje se naglasak stavlja na slušanje djeteta te davanje glasa, a ne na »nastavne vještine«. Ovaj rad stoga tvrdi da upravo kroz filozofski dijalog dijete može biti saslušano kao dijete, jer takav dijalog intrinzično pretpostavlja prepoznavanje partnera u razgovoru kao ravnopravnog sugovornika. Tako se kurikuli filozofije za djecu mogu smatrati važnim dijelom rastućeg polja »pedagogije slušanja« (v. Rinaldi 2001).

Ključne riječi

filozofija za djecu, kritika, instrumentalizacija, ideologija, sokratski dijalog, pedagogija slušanja

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Philosophie für Kinder als Zuhören

Vermeidung von Fallstricken der Instrumentalisierung

Zusammenfassung

Seit ihrer Einführung in den Siebzigerjahren waren die Curricula der Philosophie für Kinder (PfK) von verschiedenen Seiten her den Angriffen ausgesetzt. Wie Maughn Gregory in seinem Artikel über die unterschiedlichen Kritiken darauf hinweist, zog die PfK „eine sich überlappende und widersprüchliche Kritik“ auf sich, von Religions- und Sozialkonservativen bis zu pädagogischen Psychologen, Philosophen und kritischen Theoretikern (Gregory 2011, 199). Die konservative Kritik an der PfK schwimmt oftmals gegen den Strom der Philosophie und der liberalen Erziehung im Allgemeinen und kann vermutlich als ein uralter Disput angesehen werden, der trotz der Bemühungen der Philosophen andauernd auftaucht, während die Argumente der Psychologen, das philosophische Denken sei für Kinder im bestimmten Alter unbegreiflich, heutzutage leicht durch das Werk von Kieran Egan (2002) und Alison Gopnik (2009) widerlegt werden. Die Kritik der kritischen Theoretiker scheint andererseits tiefer zu reichen als alle anderen Kritiken, indem sie ein intellektuell relevantes Problem der Philosophieerziehung anschnidet: dass sie, statt ihr Versprechen der Befreiung der Subjekte einzuhalten, sie in der Tat in die Ideologie des freien Markts einfügt. Wie Gert Biesta (2011) zu zeigen versucht, „sollen“ die Curricula der PfK „eine Reihe von Fertigkeiten entwickeln, einschließlich der kognitiven und Denkfertigkeiten, der moralischen und sozialen Fertigkeiten sowie der demokratischen Fertigkeiten“ (ebd., 310), und instrumentalisieren dadurch die Philosophie, um ein bestimmtes Ziel zu erreichen, was ein fragwürdiges und alarmierendes Unternehmen ist, das „sich als ideologisch charakterisieren lässt“ (ebd., 309). Damit die PfK dieses Problem der Instrumentalisierung der Philosophie in Angriff nimmt (erörtert auch von Vansieleghem (2005)), schlägt der vorliegende Artikel vor, die Curricula der PfK (in bestimmten Fällen in dieser Richtung refor-

miert) sollten den sokratischen Dialog mit Kindern fördern, wobei der Schwerpunkt darin liege, dem Kind zuzuhören und die Stimme zu geben, und nicht in den „Lehrfertigkeiten“. Aufgrund dessen argumentiert diese Arbeit, gerade durch den philosophischen Dialog könne ein Kind als Kind gehört werden, da ein solcher Dialog intrinsisch die Anerkennung des Gesprächspartners als eines gleichberechtigten Gesprächsteilnehmers voraussetze. Die Curricula der PJK können demnach als ein wichtiger Teil des aufstrebenden Felds der „Pädagogik des Zuhörens“ betrachtet werden (vgl. Rinaldi 2001).

Schlüsselwörter

Philosophie für Kinder, Kritik, Instrumentalisierung, Ideologie, sokratischer Dialog, Pädagogik des Zuhörens

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Une philosophie pour les enfants en tant qu'« écoute »

Éviter les pièges de l'instrumentalisation

Résumé

Depuis sa création dans les années 70, le programme éducatif de philosophie a été attaqué de divers côtés. Comme le souligne Maughn Gregory dans son article consacré à ces critiques, la philosophie pour les enfants a attiré des « critiques qui s'imbriquent et se contredisent », partant des conservateurs religieux et sociaux et allant jusqu'aux psychologues de l'éducation, philosophes et théoriciens critiques (Gregory 2011, 199). La critique conservatrice de la philosophie pour les enfants va souvent à l'encontre du courant de la philosophie et de l'éducation libérale en général et peut être vue comme un vieux conflit qui réapparaît constamment malgré l'effort des philosophes, bien que les arguments du psychologue, selon lesquelles une pensée philosophique chez les enfants d'un certain âge n'est pas possible, aient été facilement réfutés par les recherches de Kieran Egan (2002) et Alison Gopnik (2009). Toutefois, il semblerait que la critique des théoriciens critiques va plus loin que les autres car elle met en avant un problème intellectuellement pertinent pour l'éducation philosophique : au lieu de tenir sa promesse en vue de la libération des sujets, elle interpelle à vrai dire ces mêmes sujets au sein d'une idéologie de marché libre. À la manière dont Gert Berta tente de le montrer, les programmes éducatifs de philosophie pour les enfants « sont supposés mettre en œuvre un éventail de compétences, comportant des compétences cognitives et des compétences de la pensée, des compétences morales et sociales, et des compétences démocratiques » (Biesta 2011, 310). Ainsi, ces programmes instrumentalisent la philosophie pour arriver à leurs fins, entreprise douteuse et alarmante « qui peut être caractérisée d'idéologique » (Ibid, 309). Afin de s'attaquer au cœur du problème de l'instrumentalisation de la philosophie (problème également abordé par Vansieleghem (2005)), ce travail suggère que les programmes de philosophie pour les enfants promeuvent les dialogues socratiques avec les enfants (et, dans certains cas, soient réformés en vue de cette voie), dialogues où l'accent est mis sur l'écoute de l'enfant et sur le fait de lui donner la parole, et non sur les « compétences de l'enseignement ». Par là, ce travail stipule que c'est précisément à travers un dialogue philosophique que l'enfant peut être entendu en tant qu'enfant car un dialogue de la sorte suppose de manière intrinsèque la reconnaissance du partenaire dans la conversation comme interlocuteur égal. Ainsi, les programmes éducatifs peuvent être perçus comme une partie importante du domaine émergent de « la pédagogie de l'écoute » (v. Rinaldi 2001).

Mots-clés

philosophie pour les enfants, critique, instrumentalisation, idéologie, dialogue socratique, pédagogie de l'écoute