

## **Title: Philosophy and Childhood**

Subtitle: Impacts of P4/wC on Philosophy

Moderator: Tetsuya KONO (Rikkyo University)

Speaker: Walter Omar Kohan (Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro)

Speaker: Magda Costa Carvalho (Universidade dos Açores)

What is philosophy for/with children? P4/wC as an educational activity has been established internationally for many years and continues to develop. Nevertheless, what is called “P4/wC” should be considered as part of a “philosophizing” movement that seeks to embed philosophical thought and practice more deeply in a society, as it encourages the participation of children in philosophical activities that have previously excluded them. Gareth Matthews accurately recognized that philosophy begins with a “sense of wonder” that children hold more abundantly than adults. In P4/wC, adults learn from children to remember how to feel, encounter and interact with the world, and how to ask questions. It is an activity in which adults learn from children how to rejuvenate their lives, rather than teaching children philosophical theories and conventional values. Contemporary philosophers such as M. Merleau-Ponty, G. Deleuze, J-F. Lyotard, G. Agamben and others have found important philosophical significance in childhood. Childhood, they commonly argue, is never a preparatory period or prelude to adulthood, but something fundamental to human existence which constitutes the human condition and cannot be forgotten, discarded, or overcome. Education is not, and must not aspire to be, the transformation of the child into an adult, but is instead the activity of warming, nurturing, caring for, and developing the child’s experience of encountering the world. Therefore, we should harshly criticize child psychology, which sees development as the transformation of the child into an adult. In this international session, we will welcome two philosophers who are also P4/wC practitioners to discuss the meaning of exploring philosophy with children, the significance of childhood for philosophy, and the fundamental relationship between philosophy and education. At the same time, they will talk about the current state of philosophy and education in Brazil and Portugal, giving us a lens through which we can reflect on that of Japan.

**Is philosophy childhood?** by **Walter Omar Kohan:** The title of this presentation is a (provocative and inspiring?) question. Being a question, it is a sign, an indication, that a presentation on the relationship between philosophy and childhood can begin different paths of thinking. It is a just a three-word question: philosophy, childhood, and the verb to be connecting them. Here the verb to be is not intended to mean identity, definition, essence... the dictionary helps offering some other interesting meanings for it: coexist, live, survive, subsist, happen, occur... So it is a question about the actual relationship between philosophy and childhood (and we might also question the order already established in this phrase by adding the question “Is childhood philosophy?”). In this presentation, we’ll explore different possibilities for this relationship and for the terms involved in it. For that it will be necessary to consider the meaning of

philosophy and childhood. This might lead to different ways of understanding not only the relationship between philosophy and childhood, but also the practice of philosophy for/with children and, more broadly, a philosophical education. Other connected concepts will be presented to unfold this exercise: life, thinking and time. Also, the political implications of affirming a form of relationship between philosophy and childhood in educational settings, or with educational purposes, will be examined. Authors like Gilles Deleuze, Paulo Freire and Olga Grau will be brought to help us enlarge these considerations. As these issues are not just theoretical queries but actually affect our pedagogical and philosophical lives, some testimonies of very concrete philosophical experiences with children of different ages carried out in different projects held by the Center of Studies of Philosophies and Childhood at the State University of Rio de Janeiro will also be considered to enrich our thinking.

**What’s philosophical about listening to children’s voices?** by **Magda Costa Carvalho:** Calling “philosophical” something a child says or promoting philosophy in schools are no longer novelties. But if it is widely agreed that children have not just the ability, but also the right to philosophize, not all practitioners and scholars agree on why we should pursue this endeavor. There can be many different reasons to justify the idea that children and philosophy should be together. For example, philosophy might come to school to comply with a certain educational and political *status quo*, dressing up as a pedagogical methodology and focusing on training children for specific outcomes. But in this case, one might ask if children’s voices are really listened to. If calling their utterances “philosophical” is a movement of discovering the world with them or a mere opportunity to change those voices into something they are not (yet). In our presentation, we suggest looking for different ways to think about these questions. We are not interested in discovering new meanings for old practices or even in proposing specific pedagogical routines that would, allegedly, improve teachers’ performances when they do philosophy with children. Instead, what we suggest is a philosophical return to the first words of whoever considers philosophizing with children: philosophy and childhood. What does it mean for a child’s utterance to be called “philosophical”? And what are we talking about when we refer to “childhood”? Is philosophy just a matter of developing certain skills? Or are children legitimate interlocutors of thought and speech? Can their voices have resonances beyond themselves? Can the voices of childhood dare to reconfigure the world and even our ways of thinking about it? If one can no longer deny that children’s voices are philosophical, it may be interesting to question what’s philosophical about the experience of listening to their voices. Are the intensity, the volume, and the timbre of those voices not only disruptively philosophical – in the sense that they engage deeply and complexly with the world – but also philosophically disruptive – in the sense that the experience of listening to their voices might question philosophy itself as a certain well-established and longstanding knowledge?

Inspired by the work of J.-L. Nancy and A. Cavarero, we will share how listening and voice have been prompting us, in the University of the Azores (*escuto.te* research project), to work with childhood and philosophy as a political urgency.