Philosophy, Power and Performance

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In this paper I will propose that a typical Philosophy for Children (P4C) class is a dynamic sub-community that functions within, yet in opposition to, the larger community in which it is customarily located, which is the school. The P4C class itself is the site of many tensions and conflicts between dominant and subordinate power interests. The forces of negotiation, compromise and accommodation that occur among competing interests in the P4C class emerge through what performance studies scholar Dwight Conquergood calls the «action, agency and transformation»[1] of performance. It is my contention that philosophical discussion arises from this intersection of power and performance.

My data for this investigation are a series of tape-recorded transcripts and field notes that I collected over a four-month period as a facilitator of a P4C class of third-grade students at an elementary school in Northern New Jersey. The collection of data and the mode of analysis that I apply to it have been shaped by three sources. My initial framework for organizing information grew out of my reading of David Kennedy's article, «The Five Communities»[2] in which he identifies structural dimensions of the community of philosophical inquiry which he names, metaphorically, «the communities of gesture, language, mind, love and interest.» These communities are «overlapping, interdependent, and interactive.» At a basic level this paper is a grasping and rendering of the five communities as they come together to create a single, particular community of philosophical inquiry in action. I report dialogue, expressive nuances of individual speakers, gestures, silence, as well as the flow of group behavior, with its moments of love, comedy, conflict, and on one occasion, collapse.

Of the five communities I have chosen to foreground one, which is the community of interest, defined by Kennedy as «the community of individuals who are seeking power and invulnerability through friendship, alliance, performance, influence, domination, hierarchy, special favor, etc.»[3] My own conception of the community of interest that shapes P4C is radically expanded to include power interests within the school, the family and the larger society. There have been other studies of P4C which have foregrounded the communities of mind and language (i.e., analyses of philo-

sophical dialogue and critical thinking[4]) and studies which have foregrounded love (e.g., examination of the concepts of caring and friendship[5]), but there has been little close study of the manifestation of interest.[6] In privileging the community of interest over other forces, I am reflecting a theoretical perspective derived from the poststructuralism of Michel Foucault, who wrote extensively about power relations in society. He delineated structures of domination through various methods of investigation, one of which he called «archeology,» a term defined by C.G. Prado in *Starting with Foucault: An Introduction to Genealogy* as:

> *... a critical investigation of disciplinary systems of knowledge with the goal of understanding the discursive practices that produced those system of knowledge ... The objective is to unearth, to excavate factors and events, overlooked likenesses, discontinuities and disruptions, anomalies and suppressed items which yield a new picture of whatever has previously gone unquestioned and has been taken as definitive knowledge and truth with respect to a particular subject matter..* [7]

Using the data from my observation of the five communities in action in a P4C classroom, I will construct an archeology - within my own broad interpretation of the word - of the discourse that emerges in P4C.

Foucault envisioned power as «conditions of possibility,» an «unspoken order,» and «that which has no existence except in the grid created by a glance, an examination, a language.»[8] How, then, does one pin down this vague, fluid, silent force? For this, we turn to Dwight Conquergood's influential 1995 paper, «Beyond the Text: Toward a Performative Cultural Politics,» in which the author challenged scholars in his own field, as well as anthropologists and cultural critics, to interrogate the traditional scholarly «textual paradigm,» which constructs meaning as «stasis, the antithesis of motion»[9] and replace it with a «performance paradigm» which «puts mobility, action and agency back into play.»[10] As Conquergood said:

> *From structure, stasis, continuity and pattern [the textual paradigm], ethnographers and cultural critics have turned their attention toward process, change, improvisation and struggle [the performance paradigm]. Particularly struggle. By focusing on power, ethnographersavoid apolitical theories of motion as free play, floating ironic detachments, and the endless deferral of political commitment - the hollow luxury of never having to take a stand.* [11]

In this paper I will be taking a stand on power relations and performance in P4C. In presenting and interpreting data from particular P4C classes, I will be drawing certain inferences about P4C in general. The picture that will emerge is «intrinsically incomplete,» to borrow a phrase from anthropologist Clifford Geertz. [12] It is presented, however, in the hope of stimulating a broader dialogue and enlarging the discourse within P4C.

PERFORMANCE AS RESTORED BEHAVIOR

A key assumption that drives this study is the belief that any Philosophy for Children class constitutes an event that can be studied and analyzed as a performance. «Performance» is a word that encompasses many categories of meaning, most of which revolve around the execution of an action or the fulfillment of a claim, promise or request. The conception of performance that I am working with here, developed by leading performance studies scholar Richard Schechner, is somewhat different. In Schechner's theory, the defining characteristic of performance is the notion of «restored behavior,» which he describes in his key essay on the subject in *Between Theater and Anthropology:*

> *Restored behavior is the main characteristic of performance... it exists separate from the performers who «do» these behaviors. Because the behavior is separate from those who are behaving, the behavior can be stored, transmitted, manipulated, transformed. The performers get in touch with, recover, remember, or even invent these strips of behavior and then rebehave according to these strips, either by being absorbed into them (playing the role, going into a trance) or by existing side by side with them ... Restored behavior is symbolic and reflexive: not empty but loaded behavior multivocally broadcasting significances: these difficult terms express a single principle: The self can act in/as another; the social or transindividual self is a role or a set of roles.*[13]

Restored behavior is found in a spectrum of events that includes but is not limited to rites, ceremonies, shamanism, eruption and resolution of crisis, performance in everyday life, play, art-making process, and ritualization.[14] There is a visionary or transformative aspect to restored behavior. As Schechner says, «Restored behavior offers to both individuals and groups the chance to rebecome what they never were - or even, and most often, to rebecome what they never were but wish to have been or wish to become.»[15] Dwight Conquergood, building on Schechner's conception of restored behavior in his article «Performance Theory, Hmong Shamans, and Cultural Politics,» identifies the «revolutionary potential of a restoration, processual view of performance as a revisioning, reassembling and reworking of social reality.»[16] The possibilities of performance as a force that can transform social reality are of particular interest with reference to P4C.

In locating and validating P4C's presence on a spectrum of performance events, it is useful to recall the historical moment that led to the creation of P4C. In a recent conversation, P4C founder Matthew Lipman recalled the frustration he felt as a faculty member at Columbia University in 1968, when that university was shut down by student protest and take-over. Meaningful, reasoned communication between faculty and students had completely broken down. The disruption at Columbia occurred during an era of intense generational conflict nationwide. In the wake of these events, it occurred to Lipman that society might do a better job of teaching children to reason than it was already doing, and that if that resulted in improved communication between the generations, that would be a good thing. As Lipman says, «I have always tried to get people to see P4C as a huge social experiment. The curriculum is a hypothesis.» [17] Thus there is a kinship between the notion of restored behavior with its «revisioning, reworking and reassembling of social reality» and some of the goals of P4C. I will return

to the subject of performance as restored behavior, and its transformative potential, at a later point in this analysis.

CONFLICT AND POWER

Another aspect of performance that is relevant to this inquiry is the concept of performance as a «staged confrontation,» developed by theorist Peggy Phelan.[18] P4C, an idea that was born in the heat of a divisive era in American history, was a conscious attempt to create a calm arena in which to hold a «staged confrontation.» The dramatic confrontations that unfold in P4C are not theatrical dramas of exciting action or emotions purged through catharsis, but the drama inherent in the presenting, discussing and contesting of ideas. It is drama that emerges out of what Michael Jackson, in *Paths Toward a Clearing: Radical Empiricism and Ethnographic Inquiry*, describes as «the flux of human interrelationships, the ways meanings are created intersubjectively as well as intertextually, embodied in gestures as well as in words, and connected to political, moral and aesthetic interests.» [19]

The staged confrontation of P4C takes place not in a theater, but amidst the «everyday life» of a classroom. It is a drama of power; as Foucault says in *Nietzsche, Genealogies, History*, «In a sense, only a single drama is ever staged ... the endlessly repeated play of dominations.» [20] The very notion of «staged confrontation» implies the public presentation of the working out of conflicts and competing interests, which is, essentially, the assertion of power. I use the word «power» not in the traditional sense as a top-down force which lays down the law, but in the Foucauldian sense, as «the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate» and as a process which «through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses» the multiplicity of force relations. Power is the web of inter-relationships, «exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations.... There is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations....»[21]

Varying degrees of performance are integral to the exercise of power in all human relations. Sociologist Erving Goffman defined «performance» in everyday social interactions as «the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants.»[22] We are, essentially, *performing* as we attempt to assert or exercise power in our individual and group interactions. Expanding the field of performance activity from individual interactions to behaviors that characterize the assertion of interest between competing group interests, James C. Scott, suggests:

... every subordinate group creates, out of its ordeal, a hidden transcript that represents a critique of *power spoken behind the back of the dominant.. ..I suggest along these lines, how we might interpret the rumor, gossip, folktales, songs, gestures, jokes and theater of the powerless as vehicles by which, among other things, they insinuate a critique of power while hiding behind anonymity or behind innocuous understandings of their conduct.* [23]

To get along with the dominant power, the subordinate power must perform according to standards and rules set by the dominant power, but their performance - or the «strips of behavior» that individuals choose to restore, to phrase it in terms of Richard Schechner's theory of «restoration of behavior» mentioned above - will contain elements of critique, parody or resistance. We will see some of these principles in action in a P4C class.

CONFLICT AND POWER: ADULTS, CHILDREN AND P4C

What are some of the key struggles in the «multiplicity of force relations» within P4C? The fundamental tension that underlies P4C is the ongoing, historic struggle between the dominant power of adults and the subordinate power of children in our society. The progressive transformation of the child from a weak, helpless newborn who needs constant care and attention into the thinking adult, the voting citizen, the docile body[24] ready to enter the workforce has been a major project of parents, schools and society since the 18th century. As Brian Sutton-Smith says in his book *The Ambiguity of Play:*

> *It is because there is an economic, social, cognitive, and affective child identity that is disjunctive with the adult identity that the inevitable struggle between the generations is taking place in Western society. The adult public transcript is to make children progress, the adult private transcript is to deny their sexual and aggressive impulses; the child public transcript is to be successful as family members and school children, and their private or hidden transcript is their play life, in which they can express both their special identity and their resentment at being a captive population.*[25]

The «adult public transcript» is familiar to anybody who has ever attended a typical school. In school adults have power as the dominant class. They have the authority to punish and reward. Adults control the codes and rule structure. They control «linguistic forms, communicative strategies, and presentation of self; that is, ways of talking, ways of writing, ways of dressing, ways of interacting,» as education writer Lisa Delpit notes.[26] In this way they control the ways in which children are expected to «perform,» both in the sense of academic standards they expected to meet in their schoolwork, and with regard to their socialization and behavior. Adults also control knowledge and possess the keys to a particular type of knowledge that is taught in school: literacy, higher order thinking skills and rational discourse.

As the subordinate power, the «captive population,» children are in school to learn the «the adult public script,» which is the template of the «child public script.» That they are there to learn this script implies that they have not yet mastered it. Thus they hold and exercise the power of resistance. There are many more children than there are adults in a school, so there is always a threat of chaos or collapse of order, which in turn creates the need for means of constant surveillance and control, the panopticon of video cameras, security guards and detention. Children's cognitive capacities are presumed to be deficient in comparison to adults'. Piaget wrote in 1959 of the «primitive habits of thought» of the egocentric child, which «consist in taking immediate personal perception as something absolute,» and entail «an inability to handle the logic of relations....

Again, by the mere fact of not being considered in their internal relations, but only as presented by immediate perception, things are either conglomerated into a confused whole (syncretism) or else considered one by one in a fragmentary manner devoid of synthesis[27]. An essential element of the mission of the school is to correct this deficit in the child's «primitive habits of thought.»

POWER/KNOWLEDGE IN P4C

Knowledge is intimately connected to the divisions of the dominant and subordinate power. Adult knowledge reflects interests and values of adults. Children's knowledge reflects interests and values of children. One source of power for children are their voices, their ability to speak and to articulate what they know, think, feel, wish, and imagine. As pedagogy based in dialogue, P4C and the Community of Inquiry model embraces and nurtures the power of language that children possess. In this way, children's ways of seeing and knowing are actively drawn out and encouraged in P4C. But in this power negotiation, P4C asserts adult interests as it trains children to use tools of philosophical discourse. Children are asked to give reasons and criteria for their statements, identify hidden assumptions, infer, classify and categorize. The P4C facilitator does not simply indulge children in their predilection to tell elaborate, embellished stories about specific events that have befallen them and their families, or to complain about unfair treatment they have received in relation to their siblings. Rather, the facilitator tries to guide these and other typical egocentric, concrete situational narratives of the children into larger categories of thought and abstraction. In this way, P4C encourages implicit negotiation between children's interests and adult interests on the terrain of knowledge production. P4C is both a disciplinary practice and a privileged entry into adult power/knowledge structures. P4C works as a counterhegemonic practice not by unequivocally siding with children as a subordinated class but by recognizing adults' and children's interests in a different way from that characteristic of a classroom. In the conventional classroom, adult interests in being deferred to and listened to by children are catered to, along with children's interests in passivity, in being able to disengage. In a P4C classroom, on the other hand, children's interests in not being treated as intellectually feeble subordinates are respected, but so are adult interests in universalizing critical, rational inquiry. P4C works not through the transcendence of interest, nor through a simple overturning of adult-child power relations, but through an implicit negotiation of adult and child interests that combines egalitarianism with commitment to intellectual rigor.[28]

So far in this paper I have been concerned with discussing theories of performance and power that I believe are relevant to the practice of Philosophy for Children. I will now present examples of dialogue that illustrate these theories and show the relationship between performance and power, and their role in the emergence of philosophical dialogue enacted by children. First, a brief description of the setting and its impact on the communicative process of P4C.

The Setting: The group of third graders that I work with sits in a circle on the floor. I sit in the circle with them. The circle alters the traditional hierarchical arrangement of the classroom, signifying that in this space that we have created with and through our bodies, for the next 45 minutes, the children are on equal footing with the adult. We are co-inquirers. Time is altered in the sense that there is no lesson plan to plow through, no pre-determined goal that I must reach before the clock reaches one forty-five. We are free to follow the discussion where it leads. When we do P4C, we are, as Richard

Schechner[29] says, «inside a nest built from the agreement to gather at a specific time and place, to perform - to do something agreed upon - and to disperse once the performance is over.» In altering time and space, and creating this nest, boundaries shift and we adhere to a different set of rules from the rules of the traditional classroom. These rules encompass basic civility in listening, taking turns and respecting the opinions of others. There are also set forms of philosophical discourse to follow. Although the P4C curriculum of stories and workbooks provide start-up material to get the conversation going, in the unfolding, the doing, the performing of P4C, I and my co-inquirers must proceed without a safety net of textual authority.

A DIALOGUE ABOUT DOGS

[The class has been discussing what is «appropriate.»]

Julia: Yes, but I have a question. If this, this, let's say ... a dog going to the bathroom, and it's not approp - does that, it's not, and it's appropriate for the dog because the dog has to do it but it's not appropriate for the person who is looking. So, does it mean it sort of is appropriate and sort of isn't?

Whitni: It's a natural thing. Well I think, are you trying to say like, it's appropriate for a dog to go the bathroom on the street and it's not appropriate for a person to go on the - [laughter].

Julia: [speaking in the character of a recalcitrant as dog] But I'm not used to that corner [laughter].

Alexis: Well, what I'm saying, I don't think, I don't think, it's inappropriate because of course the dog doesn't know any better and you can't just put a dog on a toilet and let him fall in. [Laughter]

Whitni: I didn't say that.

Alexis: He doesn't know any better.

Sarah: I agree with Alexis because um the dog like, doesn't really know better, and also I don't think it's too inappropriate to watch a dog go the bathroom because it's not exactly, the dog doesn't know, it's not like watching a person going to the bathroom [giggling]. It's not like a person.

DH: Also, do we, as people, have something that dogs and other animals don't have? [Overlapping voices]

DH: Are people listening?

Alexis: You guys are talking!

DH: There is something that we have, that animals don't have. Does anybody have any idea what that might be?

Shawon: Fur? I mean, skin.

DH: No, I mean something inside.

Shawon: Brain?

John: An intelligent mind. We have a bigger brain.

Michael: We know how to take care of ourselves. Animal needs someone to feed them. John: They're not as smart.

Whitni: Dogs go outside to use the bathroom and we use the bathroom inside.

Julia: We don't have to be trained. We don't have to go to dog school.

[Overlapping voices talking about dog training, «potty training», dog school, etc.]

Sarah: We have a communication that we can use and talk to people.

DH: We have language. And we have a consciousness of ourselves. What does that mean?

This section of conversation illustrates the process of compromise, of implicit negotiation between adult interest and child interest. Julia's opening question about the dog is not particularly compelling to adults. It flirts with the «shame barrier,» in terms of what it is permissible to talk about in public. But as the adult facilitator in a community of children, I treat the question with seriousness and respect because I sense that behind the concrete physicality of the dog and his natural functions is an inquiry into basic differences between humans and animals, as well as an inquiry into shame and consciousness of the body. For these particular children, eight and nine years old, questions about their bodies, and other bodies, lie very close to the surface of their thoughts. As children progress toward their adult identities, their bodies are «increasingly patrolled, the range of acceptable behavior increasingly carefully and narrowly defined,»[30] so the question of what is appropriate becomes of great importance. As facilitator I try to guide the children away from the concrete particulars of the dog's natural function and ask them if they can think of anything that people have that dogs and animals don't have. Reflecting my adult concerns, I am hoping to direct the children to a discussion of subjectivity and consciousness of the self. When Sarah suggests language, I put my own interests aside and decide to pursue her line of inquiry because I know that this will be a rich and interesting subject for the children. The conversation continues:

John: Dogs can talk to other dogs. They have their own language to other dogs. They have their own language. They don't have language to us and we don't have language to them but we show them movements that they learn to do. Sort of like how you teach a dog to do a trick. You don't tell it to do a trick.

DH: You can teach them to follow a command. Like «sit.»

Shawon: He will sit.

John: But they don't actually hear it as we say sit.

DH: But don't people teach us commands? Are we like dogs when we do what people tell us to do?

Sarah: I've got two things to say and they are sort of connected. Um, dogs they have, I disagree with John because, we don't know that they have a language, they like bark if they're happy [barking noises supplied by classmates] or they have like signs, but they don't have like *a language.*

John: They wag their tails. That's what I'm trying to say.

Sarah: Well, yeah, but they don't like say their language.

John: No, their tail, their tail.

Sarah: What does that mean? What does that mean?

John: It means they are excited. It means they are happy.

Sarah: It's a movement. It's not like saying «I'm very excited»

Alexis: I agree with Isabelle, because you know how um sometimes when the dogs are bad, we give a sign to them we say like [makes frowning face]. We make a dirty face at them. And when we are happy we start petting them [smiles at an imaginary dog and mimics petting] and say like «Good boy» or something like that and they actually notice that we are smiling and we have a communication sometimes with our face and sometimes with our hands instead of our mouth.

John: Yeah, but that's not talking.

Alexis: I know, that's what I said. They learn to recognize our movements.

Michael: They can tell what's happening by how you're behaving. Like Alexis said, if you are petting them they can probably be able to tell, or smiling, they could probably tell that, you're happy you're happy or ... But if you're like frowning at them or calling them «bad dog,» so sometimes when you do that, they sort of whimper.

DH: So dogs can understand our communications. And they can communicate with us so that we can understand them.

Michael: Not like words like «and» and stuff, but like verbs.

Shawon: The way I thought it goes we are a lot like dogs cause when we were littler we didn't know that people were changing our Pampers.

The discussion, with adult guidance, turns into an epistemological inquiry.

In the dialogue about the dog, four children articulate four different positions. Sarah and John capture the opposing viewpoints of rationalism and empiricism. Sarah, the Cartesian rationalist, is insistent in her belief that what we can know can only be proven through human language. The dog may wag his tail and he may look happy but without human language, no proof or validation is possible. John the empiricist knows the dog is happy because he sees the dog wagging its tail. Alexis, who says she is agreeing with Sarah, is in fact is agreeing with John in terms of being able to read the dog's sign system (John, in a miffed tone of voice, notes this discrepancy and implicitly criticizes his own earlier position on canine language when he says to Alexis, «yeah, but that's not talking.»). Alexis jabs her finger in the air in a scolding fashion and then tenderly mimes the stroking of an imaginary dog, performing a kind of mimetic, participatory knowing. For Alexis, «learning or knowing means achieving close empathetic, communal identification with the known,» in the words of Walter Ong in his book *Orality and Literacy.*[31] She knows her feelings; she looks at the dog and sees a mirror image of her own feelings, so she knows the dog's feelings. Michael builds on Alexis's comment but, where her focus was emotional and lacking in argumentative consistency, Michael in his comment is a consistent pragmatist, concerned with the perlocutionary[32] aspect, the result of the communication. As Michael says, you don't waste

time saying abstract prepositions like «and» to a dog, you say «verbs». The human relationship with a dog is based on the human commanding the dog to perform an action and the dog following the command. The cash-value of the truth, to use William James' phrase, in communicating with a dog is that the animal does what he has been told do. Action and result are proof.

Where do these ideas come from? It is a safe bet that these children, articulate as they are, have not read and memorized Descartes, Hume, Walter Ong and William James. Are they expressing Platonic ideal forms? Are there ways of perceiving reality that are hard-wired into the human brain? Are there fundamental dichotomies that haunt human consciousness? Are the children «pint-sized philosophers»?[33] Or are they being manipulated into saying clever things by the facilitator?

It is possible to build a case on behalf of all of the options stated above. A key issue is whether one can uphold the claims that children such as Sarah, John, Alexis and Michael do indeed have an ability to reason philosophically and to state distinct philosophical positions, and that philosophy is not simply the property of the individual genius or authorial powers of figures such as Plato, Descartes, Hume, and James as transmitted from the facilitator to the children. A novel approach to conceptualizing the exchange among the four children is to see it as a performance, or a «restoration,» in the Schechnerian sense, of philosophy. Consider these words of Bert O. States:

> *(W)e may say that even if there had been no Shakespeare, and therefore no Hamlet, there is still the something out there in human empirical behavior that finally got represented in the behavior of Hamlet, the character. This is the field of «invariance» Shakespeare tapped into by means of his own pungent «semiotic» system.... So performance is always preceded by, and built on, an «invariant «field of twice-behaved behavior; somewhere, at all times, one of the profiles of human behavior Shakespeare embodied in his creation of Hamlet, Macbeth, Lear, Lady Macbeth, Rosalind, et al., is detectable in the world if one had the wit (or the artistry to see it).»*[34]

Sarah, John, Alexis and Michael are voicing a «field of invariance» in their very own «pungent semiotic system,» which is the unique discourse of P4C. This discourse has emerged because the conventional adult-child power relationship, in which the adult represents authority and tells the child what to think and do, has been altered, in such a way that the children are able to formulate and express ideas with minimal adult intervention.

There are multiple levels of performance manifested in this conversation, in addition to the performance of philosophy. As if on cue, at the mere mention of the word «bark,» a chorus of «bow wows» and «ruff ruffs» can be heard on the tape recording. Alexis petted, smiled and frowned at an imaginary dog. Even Sarah underlines her rationalist position by consciously playing the role of «not a dog» when she says «It's not like saying `I'm so excited.»` The children flow in and out of performance playing dogs and masters because it is fun, because it gets a laugh, because it is a release from tension and boredom within the confines of school. But there is another, deeper level to the roles that the children take on. Beyond Artaud's double, [35] there is a triple level of perfor-

mance at work, for in playing a dog in relation to a master, they are also playing themselves in relation to their parents, teachers and other authority figures.

As Shawon says, «we are a lot like dogs `cause when we were littler we didn't know that people were changing our Pampers.» The children can play at being dogs because they know they are not dogs. In talking about dogs, and acting like dogs, the children are reflecting back on and re-enacting their own recent history as subordinate, unruly creatures without language. The relationship between language and power permeates the entire discussion. Dominant power is wielded by those with a superior command of human language. John's dog may indeed communicate feelings by wagging his tail, but the dog is always subordinate to his human master. Michael uses verbs to tell his dog what to do. Even the empathetic Alexis is concerned with rewarding or punishing her imaginary dog. Without language and without control of one's bodily functions - inextricably linked, at least in this conversation - one may, like a dog, be loved, petted and pampered, but one is at the lower end of the power relationship.

Beyond a narrative of power that reflects their sociopolitical location as children, the children are also actors in the larger narrative of P4C. One of the ironies of P4C is that children are trained to engage in rigorous mental activity of a sort that most adults rarely engage in. The children become, essentially, «ideal adults.» The notion of «ideal adults» is, I believe a particularly threatening aspect of P4C to adults, for the possibility of children being more reasonable and reflective than most adults undermines the whole power structure upon which the disjunction between adult identity and child identity is built. In this way P4C is, in theater scholar Marvin Carlson's words, a «typical post-modern double operation ... a dynamic both coercive and enabling.»[36] Coercive, because as they engage in calm, reasoned exchanges questioning the nature of being, time, truth, justice and wisdom, the children are essentially being forced into their role of «ideal adults.» Enabling, because in the example that I have given here, the conversation about the dog, the children were engaged in a conversation in which they were free and able to express ideas and feelings that go right to heart of their feelings of powerlessness as children.

Earlier in this paper I have discussed the relationship between adult power and child power in the typical school setting, and the ways in which that relationship is reformulated in P4C. In the examples of dialogue that I have given, in the conversation about dogs, the children carry on a conversation that meets adult standards of reasonableness and reflection, but that also manages to express ideas and feelings that are important to them as children. Not every moment in a P4C class is so golden. One should not forget that P4('_ is a disciplinary practice, and resistance to disciplinary practices is inevitable. One should also not forget that reassembling social reality and transforming children into ideal adults is an adult agenda. To develop a thorough understanding of power and performance in P4C, one has to look at the occasions in which the pedagogy of P4C does not work, and the ways in which children resist the discipline that is imposed on them.

Playing the ideal adult is one of many roles that children play. But is it perhaps possible that one may wear the mask of an ideal adult, but do so in such a way that one is mocking or parodying not only

the «ideal adult» but also the whole notion of the adult as an authority figure? Sutton-Smith has documented the ways in which play can be an expression of what he identifies as the child's «hidden transcript» with its implicit critique of adult power.[37] In this following section of P4C dialogue the philosophical discussion has broken down and the disciplinary structures are being challenged through play and gentle mockery of the adult:

Julia-as Jennifer Dialogue

Background information: In my first few weeks teaching this group of children I had a great deal of difficulty remembering the children's names. The children caught on to this difficulty and when I would call and them ask them their name, would, without skipping a beat, state the name of another student in the class. My only clue was to glance at the teacher, who would roll her eyes and gently shake her head. To use this to stimulate a discussion, I brought in a brief story about a girl named Ginger. Ginger named her hands, her feet, her house, and then when she has named everything, wonders if she can name her name. This stimulated a fruitful discussion of categories and self-reference which, at the starting point below, has just started to run out of steam:

DH: Kate, you have the floor. And what is the floor's name?

Multiple Responses: *«Mr. Wood, « «Rug, « e.g..*

DH: (Call for quiet, etc.)

Julia: I agree with Sarah and I agree with Anna. And by the way, my name is [dramatic pause]...Jennifer.

DH: Now have you named your name Jennifer?

(Surprised laughter)

Julia: [pause] Yes.

Thomas: And now she's named her name's name «Julia.»

Karen: No, her name is Julia.

John: But except, she's named her name Julia - I mean Jennifer. *r*

Thomas: Unless you want to rename yourself back into Jennifer.

Voice: That's Jennifer, that's Julia. No wait, no, no, it's the other way around.

Thomas: You want to rename your Jennifer name Julia...

John: No that's Jennifer, that's Julia...

Thomas: She's the pacific [sic] Julia!

DH: Let's go to our textbooks. Page 21 ...

Julia, wearing her ideal adult mask, starts off her comment with the standard line of P4C discourse, the statement «I agree with...,» However, unable to resist poking fun at the flaws exhibited by the

adult authority (inability to remember the children's names) she drops her mask of good behavior, and issues a challenge to the authority of the adult by saying «and by the way my name is.. Jennifer.» This is an example of something that James C. Scott speaks of in *Domination and the Arts of Resistance,* which is the intense pressure that the subordinate power feels to rebel and reveal its hidden transcript.[38] The dramatic pause and Julia's choice of the name Jennifer is not coincidental, since «Jennifer» was the name of a previous, much-missed P4C teacher. Willing to play along, and trying to redirect Julia's comment back towards the subject under discussion, I suggest to Julia that perhaps she has «named her name Jennifer.» The class takes this and runs with it, as an air of giddy excitement worthy of a fast-paced comedy routine erupts in the class. In early 20th century play theorist Johan Huizinga's words, the play has «wholly run away with the players.[39] Part of the sense of giddiness and edge evident in listening to the tape recording of this conversation comes from the fact that in invoking the name of the previous teacher, and mocking the current teacher the children are asserting their power, and in doing so, are taking a risk of reprisal. Risk is, after all, in the words of Hans-Georg Gadamer, an essential element of «the attraction of a game,» and part of «the fascination it exerts» is the chance that one will fail[40] - or in this case, get in trouble with the teacher.

Although this brief segment of dialogue centered on teasing and verbal play carries some risk and would seem to threaten the established power relations and disciplinary structure of P4C, in fact it serves the function of strengthening it. In his book, *The Battle for Christmas,* Stephen Nissenbaum explore the concept of «misrule» in which the European peasants of the Middle Ages were allowed, for a limited length of time under certain limited conditions at holiday festival times, to mock and threaten the power structure through play-acting as the lords and ladies of the landed gentry. A certain degree of misbehavior, unacceptable at other times of the year, was tolerated. A vestige of this type of cultural practice survives in Halloween, in which children knock on doors and *demand* candy from adults, threatening «a trick» (mayhem and misrule) if they don't get candy. As Nissenbaum says:

> *Some historians argue that role inversions actually functioned as a kind of safety valve that contained class resentments within clearly defined limits, and that by inverting the established hierarchy (rather than simply ignoring it), those role inversions actually served as a reaffirmation of the existing social order.* [41]

In the P4C class, a brief spell of «misrule» in the form that I presented here, teasing the adult, functions as a safety valve that releases pressure that builds up within the system, but basically keeps the system going. When the children play a role that is counter to their established role within the system, they continue to engage and support the system. Also, like the peasants who go back to being peasants when the time of holiday misrule is over, when I request that we return to our textbooks to get back to work the children meekly do as they are told. It is a curious twist of P4C that, if one accepts the model of adult vs. child as a contrastive pair with the adult superior to the child, and if P4C is acknowledged as a disciplinary practice that inverts the traditional power hierarchy of the pair in such a way that the child becomes an ideal adult, then one must accept the possibility that occasionally the children will perform their own inversion on the system in order to rebecome - children!

LIMINALITY AND NON-PERFORMANCE

A brief spell of occasional joking and teasing in the classroom may have value as a social safety valve, but just as medieval misrule carried the implicit threat of a full scale riot and violent collapse of social order, the potential for things to get out of hand is also present in the P4C classroom. Earlier, I spoke of P4C as a nest in which time, space and power relations are altered within the school. This can create disequilibrium, uncertainty and confusion. The nest protects participants from the world outside, but dangerous things can occur inside the nest if we don't maintain the rules that we have tacitly agreed upon. There are moments when the intimacy and intensity of confronting the «disorientations of direct encounters with the human,»[42] in the words of Edward Said, cause eruptions that overwhelm the community, as in this segment of dialogue:

Michael Hits John

Michael: It would be approp - it would be appropriate to um look at a racoon, um, walking down the street or something - [John does something disruptive]

DH: John, let him finish.

Michael: So, um. So, um. So like um. So, um it would be appropriate because they wouldn't, because they can't like -

[John continues to engage in silly distracting behavior; class is laughing, people are talking; Michael hits John; John flops over with a dramatic crash; Michael burst into tears; as John engages in his dramatic crash he exposes several missing magic markers that he had snitched earlier from the teachers desk and has been sitting on. I sit quietly, looking at the children. The children eventually bring themselves to order. Michael regains his composure, but a few tears continue to fall. Murmurs of apology to Michael from the class. A few people tentatively volunteer that what John did was... «inappropriate»...and «besides, it was rude.» Trying to be helpful John picks up the conversation where Michael left off.]

John: He said about a racoon, a racoon walking down the street it would be OK to look at it. DH: Michael do you want to add to that? Do you want to say something more?

[Michael shakes head. More murmured apologies. Silence for several seconds.]

In the examples of dialogue that I have presented up to this point, I have shown how certain structures of power shape the emergence of the performance of philosophical discourse. The performance can either be done straight, as in the dialogue about the dog, or it can be played for laughs, as in the Julia-as Jennifer dialogue. Something very different develops in the dialogue above. At the point that Michael hits John, the delicate adult-child power balance that allows P4C to function has completely collapsed, and significantly, so has the performance element. Although he is writing about play, not performance, the words of Johan Huizinga are relevant in this context, for as he notes «as soon as the rules are transgressed the whole play world collapses. The game is over. The umpire's whistle breaks

the spell and sets `real' life going again.»[43] Indeed, there is nothing staged about this confrontation. John was engaged in a «me-first» power grab, and in frustration Michael (typically a well-behaved child) lashed out and punched him. Michael's action was spontaneous, unpremeditated. The emotion was real and raw. One reason why there are several seconds of silence after the incident was because those of us present were in shock, and simply did not know what to do next. The usual rules of P4C were suspended, and the question was whether or not adult authority - the shrill blast of the umpire's whistle - should intervene.

The Michael John altercation put the community in a dangerous state of *liminality*, along the lines of the model of social drama delineated by anthropologist Victor Turner. In a liminal state power relations in a community are uncertain. Liminality is the «threshold between more or less stable phases of the social process .... It takes up its menacing stance in the forum itself and, as it were, dares the representatives of order to grapple with it. It can not be ignored or wished away.»[44] To overcome the crisis, the community must redress the grievance.

In this particular situation, after the absorbing the initial shock of Michael's action, I actively chose to do nothing, trusting this particular community to right itself without an authoritarian or retaliatory intervention from me. The children took over as the «representatives of order,» ready to grapple with the crisis. Without prompting, the children apologized to Michael and reprimanded John for his aggressive behavior. John, in his own fashion, attempted to right his wrong by picking up the conversation where it was left off. After a silence in which I sensed a feeling of collective embarrassment at this exposure in front of me - an adult stranger who had come to the class only three times previously - the discussion resumed. In its new state of reintegration, the class was more focused and calmer than before the crisis. They restored their behavior as «ideal adults.» A serious philosophical discussion ensued. Individual students, particularly the aggressive John and the helpful Alexis, became, essentially, co-facilitators, shushing peers who spoke out of turn, or keeping the dialogue moving by restating unclear points made by less confident or less articulate members of the group.

The children, led by Alexis and the repentant John, displayed what turn-of-the- century American philosopher Josiah Royce spoke of as the «proper attitude of will»[45] that those in an interpretive community, of which a P4C class is an example, must possess. Robert S. Corrington says of Royce that he:

> *correctly understands the general ontology of Schopenhauer to be one that stresses the priority of the unbridled and unguided will to live. This will to live is found in all beings and forces them to struggle against each other for domination. This force gives rise to a tragic struggle that, in its extreme forms, makes community impossible.*[46]

There is a contrary attitude of will that serves «the general hermeneutic process of communal query - the attitude of genuine (not natural) loyalty ... genuine loyalty is both articulate and strenuous.»[47] The altercation between Michael and John is an example of the «tragic struggle» for domination. The recovery of the community is enabled by the active co-facilitating of John, Alexis and several other

students who were indeed «articulate and strenuous» in their loyalty to the community in pursuit of an inquiry larger than any individual interest. In this particular instance, the drama of John and Michael and the associated breakdown and repair of community resulted in a strengthened community that showed that it had the discipline to grow, to adjust, to show its loyalty to the larger inquiry and thence to move forward. The episode of John and Michael resulted in something quite unusual: the children experiencing their collective power as a community of children. From the liminal moment of breakdown, the class turned to the very discussion of canine language (A Dialogue About Dogs) that I previously analyzed. My ethnographic discussion of philosophy as power/performance thus loops back on itself; the high level of intellectual engagement of the students, including John and Michael, in their discussion of canine language exemplifies performative restored behavior that is inextricably linked to an earlier moment of performative collapse.

CONCLUSION

Earlier in this paper I quoted Michel Foucault speaking of power in terms of «conditions of possibility» and an «unspoken order.» Through descriptive examples and analysis I have tried to «speak» certain facets of an unspoken order that exists in Philosophy for Children. In doing so, I have attempted to shift the epistemological realm in which P4C is typically located, which is the familiar «communities» of language and mind, and to reposition P4C in an alternative epistemology of embodied and performed power relations. Using a performance paradigm such as this contributes to, in Dwight Conquergood's words, an «epistemological pluralism» that works to decenter and unsettle «valorized paradigms» of philosophical discourse as we seek to understand «a wider range of meaningful action.»[48]

If there is one primary conclusion that one can draw from this study, it is that to conceptualize P4C as a unitary, linear process severely limits our ability to grasp the totality and depth of the experience. For example, many who do P4C are familiar with Matthew Lipman's 1984 curricular model which lists «the offering of the text; the construction of the agenda; solidifying the community; exercises and discussion plans;» and concludes with «encouraging further responses.»[49] This orderly chain of ideas, in which one step follows another in logical fashion, is pedagogy as clear narrative structure, which is a structure that replicates a text-based model of thinking. Yet the embodied, voiced emergence of philosophical dialogue is never quite so clean and orderly. In the textual model, there is no chaos, no transgression, no transformation, no ecstasy, no sense of the «high» that a group reaches in occasional moments of great dialogue nor of the «low» of certain other moments. P4C has something in common with a contemporary form of performance termed «post-linear performance,» which «ignores the boundaries of tho river of theatrical convention and engulfs the many positions of the viewers, the actors, the critics. Post-linear performance acknowledges that the play plays on after the curtain goes down and began long before the audience took their seats.» [50]

Through three examples, I have tried to show the «joy and terror,» to use David Kennedy's words in «The Five Communities,» as power and performance intersect to create varying states of

the P4C experience. In «A Conversation About Dogs,» power relations between adults and children were negotiated in such a way that not only did a serious philosophical discussion emerge, but the exchange had a palpable intensity and interest to the children because the conversation was not only about dogs, but also about power relations in their own lives. In the second example, «Julia-as Jennifer,» the children temporarily got the upper hand in asserting their power, which produced some entertaining moments in which philosophical argumentation was subordinated and gently mocked. In the third example, «Michael Hits John,» power relations went awry, performance fell away, and philosophy was put aside until order was restored, when the group renewed its commitment to a collective identity, and to the task of doing philosophy. In addition to these examples, I suggest that there are other distinct states that emerge out of yet other varied configurations of the relationship between power and performance, states that can and should be revealed with further ethnographic observation, documentation and analysis of P4C. Different power/performance states are interrelated. Dramatic highs in P4C as in performance more generally are dependent upon lows, or at least upon fallow or stage-setting moments; successes are contingent upon failures, which may in fact not be failures but necessary moments of stepping backwards and regrouping before resuming forward movement. In Victor Turner's words, «the opposites, as it were, constitute one another and are mutually indispensable.»[51] What may seem to be chaotic or irrelevant elements in P4C - joking, breakdowns of order, and so on - are in fact part of an order or overarching structure of performing power relations in which the interests of adults and children are implicitly negotiated and fused.

I close with a few comments about the educational value of P4C. Within the framework of conventional epistemology, it would be following a well-worn path to list the reasoning or critical thinking skills that can be taught through P4C. But seen from the perspective of the alternative epistemology of power/performance, the children are learning radical and subversive lessons about the force of their own power in the domain of thought. Within the confines of school, they are breaking the barriers of the reproductive, «banking education» described by Paulo Freire.[52] Although Freire was not concerned with performance, he was concerned with power, and his educational philosophy has been the inspiration for the work of Augusto Boal, noted Brazilian theater director and author of *Theatre of the Oppressed.*[53] In a 1997 conversation with Richard Schechner, Boal, when asked about the relationship between his work and Freire's responded that «at the base of both is truth that you cannot teach if you don't learn from those you are teaching.»[54] Boal, whose work is an ongoing experiment in theater as a means of effecting social change, has said:

> *Hamlet says in his famous speech to the actors that theatre is a mirror in which may be seen the true image of nature, of reality. I wanted to penetrate this mirror, to transform the image I saw in it and to bring that transformed image back to reality: to realize the image of my desire. I wanted it to be possible for the spectators in Forum Theatre to transgress, to break the conventions, to enter the mirror of theatrical fiction, rehearse forms ofstruggle, and then return to reality with the images of their desires.* [55]

Boal's fiery declamation is not so far from Matthew Lipman's original intention to teach reasoning skills to young people as a way to improve society. In the 45-minute P4C class, the students «enter the mirror of theatrical fiction,» restore their behavior as ideal adults, and then, one hopes, «return to reality» where they use this behavioral restoration in other contexts outside the P4C classroom. Despite

P4C's origins in a turbulent time more than thirty years ago, the sense of struggle and potential for transgression and transformation of adult and child interests inherent in the P4C process has been a predominantly latent rather than overt element of the field. That latent element - the chance to perform power - is, however, the very aspect of P4C that makes it compelling to the children who do it. Ethnographic analyses of the power/performance dynamic of P4C may contribute to surfacing that latent element and giving it the prominence it deserves.

NOTES:

1. Dwight Conquergood, «Beyond the Text: Toward a Performative Cultural Politics,» Presented at the «Future of the Field» Performance Studies Conference, New York University, March 25, 1995, unpubl.

2. David Kennedy, «The Five Communities,» *Inquiry,* 16, no. 4 (Summer 1997): 66.

3. Ibid., p. 74. Given the emphasis of this paper on performance, there is a connection as well with what Kennedy calls the community of gesture, which involves kinesthetic and other physical modes of expression. The concept of performance as employed here bridges between the kinesthetic domain of the body and the simultaneously corporeal and abstract domain of power.

4. Matthew Lipman, «Philosophy for Children and Critical Thinking,» in *Thinking Children and Education* (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co., 1993), 682-684.

Catherine McCall, «Young Children Generate Philosophical Ideas,» ibid., 569 - 592

Tim Sprod, «Improving Scientific Reasoning through Philosophy for Children: An Empirical Study,» *Thinking,* 13, no. 2: 11 - 16.

5. Jen Glaser, «Socrates, Friendship and the Community of Inquiry,» *Inquiry,* 16, no. 4: 22 - 46. Mary Fearnley-Sander, «Care and the Force of the Argument in Respecting Difference,» *Thinking,* 14, no. 1: 24 - 28.

6. See Pavel Lushyn and David Kennedy, «The Psychodynamics of Community of Inquiry and Educational Reform: A Cross Cultural Perspective,» *Thinking* 15, no. 3: 9 - 16, esp. p.14.

7. C.G. Prado, *Starting with Foucault: An Introduction to Genealogy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 25.

8. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1973), xx - xxii.

9. Conquergood, op. cit., 10.

10. Ibid., 11.

11. Ibid., 12.

12. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973) 29.

13. Richard Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology,* foreword by Victor Turner, (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 35 - 36.

14. Idem, *Peformance Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1988) «Introduction: The Fan and the Web,» xii-xiv.

15. Idem, *Between Theater and Anthropology,* 3 8.

16. Dwight Conquergood, «Performance Theory, Hmong Shamans, and Cultural Politics,» in *Critical Theory and Performance,* Janelle G. Reinelt and Joseph R. Roach, eds. (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992), 44.

17. Matthew Lipman, interviewed by Darcy Hall, May 4, 2001, Montclair, NJ, unpubl.

18. Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London & New York: Routledge, 1993), 36 - 37, quoted in Bert O. States, «Performance as Metaphor,» *Theatre Journa148,* no. 1 (March 1996): 9.

19. Michael Jackson, *Paths Toward a Clearing: Radical Empiricism and Ethnographic Inguiry* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989), 184.

20. *The Foucault Reader,* ed., Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 85.

21. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Vol. I* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 92 -94.

22. Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self 'in Everyday Life,* (New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1959), 15.

23. James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), xxii, quoted in Brian Sutton-Smith, *The Ambiguity of Play* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 115.

24. *The Foucault Reader,* 179 - 187.

25. Brian Sutton-Smith, *The Ambiguity of Play* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 123.

26. Lisa Delpit, *Other People's Children* (New York: The New Press, 1995), 25.

27. Jean Piaget, *judge ement and Reasoning in the Child* (Totowa, NJ: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1972), 220 - 221.

28. Wayne Eastman, «What's Left, What's Right,» presented at Lund University seminar, April 30, 2000, unpubl.

29. Schechner, *Performance Theory,* 168.

30. Janet Wolff, «Reinstating Corporeality: Feminism and Body Politics,» in *Meaning in Motion* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1997), 84.

31. Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (London & New York: Routledge, 1982), 45.

32. J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things with Word* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 107.

33. Amy Ellis Nutt, «Pint-sized philosophers,» *The Star Ledger* (New Jersey), 9 May 2001, 31 (discussing the P4C class described in this paper).

34. Bert O. States, «Performance as Metaphor,» *Theatre journal* 48, no. 1 (March 1996): 23.

35. Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and Its Double,* trans. Mary Caroline Richard (New York: Grove Press, 1958), 48.

36. Marvin Carlson, «Resistant Performance,» in *The Routledge Reader in Politics and Performance,* Lizbeth

Goodman with Jane de Gay, eds. (London & New York: Routledge, 2000), 63.

37. Brian Sutton-Smith, *The Ambiguity of Play* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 116-123.

38. James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance,* quoted in Brian Sutton-Smith, *The Ambiguity of Play* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 116.

39. Johan Huizinga, «Nature and Significance of Play as a Cultural Phenomenon,» in *Ritual, Play and Performance: Readings in the Social Sciences/Theatre,* Richard Schechner and Mady Schuman, eds. (New York: A Continuum Book, The Seabury Press, 1976), 52.

40. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method,* Second, Revised Edition, trans. Revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, (New York: Continuum, 1998), 106.

41. Stephen Nissenbaum, *The Battle for Christmas* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 11.

42. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 93.

43. Huizinga, op. cit., 55.

44. Victor Turner, *Dramas, Field, and Metaphors* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1974), 39.

45. Robert S. Corrington, *The Community of Interpreters* (Macon, GA: Mercer University, 1987), 25.

46. Ibid., 25 - 26.

47. Ibid., 26.

48. Dwight Conquergood, «Beyond the Text: Toward a Performative Cultural Politics,» Presented at the «Future of the Field» Performance Studies Conference, New York University, March 25, 1995, unpubl., 3.

49. Matthew Lipman, *Thinking in Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 241 -243.

50. Susan Kozel, «Introduction to Part Eight,» in *The Routledge Reader in Politics and Performance,* 259.

51. Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969), 97.

52. Paulo Freire, «Pedagogy of the Oppressed,» in Sources: *Notable Selections in Education,* Fred Schultz, ed., Guilford, CT: Dushkin/McGraw-Hill, 1998), 63-70.

53. Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed,* Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride, trans. (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1985).

54. «Augusto Boal, City Councillor» an interview by Richard Schechner and Sudipto Chatterjee, *The Drama Review,* 42 no. 4 (Winter 1998): 89.

55. Augusto Boal, *Legislative Theatre,* Adrian Jackson trans. (London & New York: Routledge, 1998), 9.

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