

Playful thinking with hands in a finnish ‘death class’

Pensamiento lúdico con las manos en una “clase de la muerte” finlandesa

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ABSTRACT: In my paper presentation I re-turn to the field work of Small Matters – a project funded by the Research Council of Finland (2023-2026). It investigates your children’s animistic and other beliefs about multispecies death and dying. Although dying features in young children’s everyday lives, many (in)formal educators avoid it as too sensitive to discuss in school. For the Small Matters project, Philosophy with Children combined with arts-based methods was used as the pedagogy for the teaching of a small group of first graders in a Finnish school over a period of six weeks (twice a week).

This internationally well-established democratic pedagogy (Gregory et al, 2017) starts by inviting children’s own questions from, in this case, a picturebook as a starting point for philosophical enquiries. With the help of a short video clip and images from this ‘death class’, I experiment with a posthumanist analysis of the experiences of one child during the first year of our field work. In the video he is making a grave with plasticine and by slowing down (MacRae, 2020) some parts of the video and speeding up other parts (Menning & Murris, 2023) I explore his philosophical exploration of death when thinking with his hands. Inspired by Heraclitus’ notion of time, *aion*, this kind of use of the camera articulates a particular intensive relationship with, and experience of, time as associated with play and childhood (Kohan, 2015).

Such childing techniques encourage the viewer to be affected by image(s) not only intellectually, but also affectively,. Unlike reflection, performative videography as a diffractive methodology traces objects and bodies (including humans), not as individually existing entities, but as relational phenomena across multiple (non)human agencies (Barad, 2007, 2018). Including postqualitative approaches to teaching, learning and data analysis resituates agency to include more-than-human actors at different scales (e.g., the GoPro).

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