Lewis, Tyson E., and Igor Jasinski. "Adventure." *Rethinking Philosophy for Children: Agamben and Education as Pure Means*. London,: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021. 61–76. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781350133600.ch-3>>.

Downloaded from Bloomsbury Collections, www.bloomsburycollections.com, 26 April 2023, 11:31 UTC.

Copyright © Tyson E. Lewis and Igor Jasinski 2022. Released under a CC BY-NC-ND licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>). You may share this work for non-commercial purposes only, provided you give attribution to the copyright holder and the publisher, and provide a link to the Creative Commons licence.

Adventure

In the last chapter, we established the quality of thinking found in P4I (contemplation) in relation to rules (as the form given to the use of the community by itself through contemplation). In this chapter, we will turn our attention to focus on the quality of the speech when speech speaks its own speakability. Our inspiration for this chapter is Lipman's emphasis on the "irresistible adventure"¹ that education can be. Lipman and colleagues write,

But why cannot the child's entire school experience be an adventure? It should be chockfull of opportunities for surprise, with the tension of exciting possibilities, with tantalizing mysteries to be wondered at as well as with fascinating clarifications and illuminations. ... Adventure is satisfying in and of itself, one dwells so often in memory on one's past adventures that it is as though they somehow contained, like dreams, the secret meaning of one's life. ... [A] dventure, never free of risk and delightful uncertainty, is what the child's reveries suggest life ought to be.²

Here, adventure is specified as "opportunities for surprise," "tension of exciting possibilities," and "mysteries." It is full of risks and uncertainty but also contains the secret meaning of one's life. Because of this last criterion, adventure appears to be the very heart of philosophical inquiry. Philosophy is not so much about cultivating skills or dispositions in critical thinking as it is defining the existential meaning of one's life. Yet it is precisely this risk and uncertainty that is what is often sacrificed when P4C takes an instrumental turn and aligns itself with the discourses and practices of the learning society (as discussed in the introduction to this book). Without adventure, philosophy turns into yet another skillset and inquiry, into yet another operationalized and thus measurable metric under the law of learning. Such approaches denude philosophy of its adventure.

To help return to and preserve the adventure of philosophy, it is our wager that we need to articulate the qualities of speech found within the community of infancy. In particular, we will focus on how infantile speech is akin to babble and

how the community of infancy is a special kind of contemplation best described as *studious play* with this babble. The adventure in thinking that defines the community's practice emerges from studious play with speech, or rather, with the speakability of speech (an experiment not in what can be said so much as a demand *that* language be said in what can be said). In this sense, the real experiment that Lipman hints at is not found outside of language but is rather the act of speaking as such. Risk here is always the risk of attempting to speak not just this or that idea, concept, proposition, or belief but rather speaking speech's speakability and thus manifesting its infancy. And, in the end, this is no deep mystery (a hidden essence or telos below the surface of experience), but rather an encounter with an outside that is so close it is inside, and an inside that is so far it is outside: the communicability that pronounces itself through our trembling manners.

But before this description can get underway, it is imperative to outline the kinds of speech that normally circulate throughout a classroom. As Lipman first recognized, children's speech is often highly limited and constrained in typical classroom settings. He worries, "[I]n many classrooms talking has a bad name, and students' efforts to engage in it covertly are treated as evidence of disobedience rather than as evidence of healthy impulses needing only to be effectively organized so as to be harnessed in the service of education."³ Reiterating this point, Sharp also worries, "Schools are often places where teachers do most of the talking and children mostly listen. If children do talk, they talk about things that teachers think they should talk about."⁴ Expanding on these basic insights, we might argue that there are typically three types of legitimate speech in a classroom. First, there is speech as confirmation. This might be speech as confirmation of an assignment done or order followed ("Yes, Mr. L, I completed my homework"). Second, we might find examples of speech as an explanation of a wrongdoing ("I didn't complete the homework because my dog ate my notes!"). Finally, there is speech that illustrates learning has happened. This is perhaps the most educationally relevant form of speech found in a classroom as it testifies to a successful transaction between teacher and student ("The answer is the 5th Amendment!"). Notice, none of these forms of speech embody the act of thinking. They might confirm that thinking of some kind has taken place, but they themselves do not enact thinking. There is, in other words, a strict division between thinking and speaking. Speaking only conveys something that has already happened (that something has been completed, that something has been thought through, that something has been learned). Speech (as thinking, as inquiry) does not conform to these types and

thus acquires a “bad name,” as Lipman points out. It is also important to note that when speech and thinking are separated, speech can only act as a kind of oath that testifies to what has or has not happened/been learned. It can only curse or bless what a student says. In this sense, we are once again stuck in a cycle where speaking as oath-taking always already contains the kernel of blasphemy against the student within speech (see Chapter 1).

As opposed to these models, P4C opts for a different experience of thinking and speaking: one that does not separate the two acts but rather conjoins them through inquiry. Speaking, in P4C, is an act of joining back together that which has been split apart: thinking and speaking. The dialogue is therefore alive with thinking, and students discover what they think through their speaking. Dialogue, for Lipman, actively “sharpens the child’s reasoning skills as nothing else can.”⁵ This is why dialogic practice is so important for rethinking how to do philosophy (with children or with adults). This is precisely why P4C is adventurous for Lipman: there are stakes in speaking because through speaking, one discovers one’s thoughts. We agree with Lipman and P4C advocates as to the importance of speaking and its relationship to thinking. Yet there is still a problem with this model. In finding thought *through* collective speaking, *speech disappears*. And when this happens, the adventure of education that Lipman wanted to preserve is itself sacrificed. Such an adventure might not be as effectively organized or harnessed as Lipman had desired, but it nevertheless is a unique opportunity to think about infancy in and through one’s speaking. In P4I, *speaking makes its appearance as that which is to be thought*. It is not a mere instrument for giving birth to the act of thinking. Rather the mediality of language to carry thought reveals itself in its infancy as what ought to be thought. And *this* is what is most adventurous precisely because it renders inoperative the laws of learning that can evaluate speech according to predetermined success conditions.

The starting point for thinking the adventure offered by P4I is actually Lipman’s philosophical text *Pixie*, which, in our estimation, is the critical piece of fiction written by Lipman precisely because it foregrounds language. *Pixie* is unique in the Lipman catalog because it not only utilizes language to convey thought, but actually makes language *appear* as a concern for thought. As Sharp so eloquently puts it, *Pixie* is “a story of language inquiring about itself.”⁶ The character Brian attempts to understand the relationship between thinking, meaning, and himself, and in so doing, stumbles upon the speakability of language. It is our argument that Brian has undergone an adventure in the strict philosophical sense. With *Pixie* in mind, we want to liberate the adventurousness of education alluded to by Lipman, but to do so we have to suspend the dominant

tendency in his thought toward harnessing this adventure, and thus denuding it of that which makes it adventurous in the first place: the appearance of infancy. It also means that the philosopher need not write philosophical novels for children so much as adventurous fables for studious play!

From Operative Inquiry to Inoperative Infancy

What kind of linguistic experiment is P4C? On the more or less traditional view, P4C is a linguistic experiment that concerns developing reasonable thinking. To do so, it promotes dialogue in a community of inquiry where the facilitator only intervenes in order to promote more thinking through certain kinds of questions. In this model, P4C accepts the existence of speech as the taken-for-granted background out of which a community of inquiry can come to define itself, its goals, and its procedures. Yet for Agamben, the real philosophical experience is first and foremost the wonder at the appearance of speech as such.

Infancy, as we have been arguing, is an experiment in language that wonders at its very appearance as language. Through such experimentation, language speaks its own (un)speakable speakability. Infancy in this sense is both *inside and outside of language simultaneously* or is a form of speaking that recursively recalls the (in)capacity for speech within speech. Infancy is poised between animal *phone* and human *logos*. It thus does not sacrifice either and instead holds them both in suspension. As such, infancy is without negation (as it affirms the zone of contact between speech and nonspeech). It is also without destiny (as it does not have a prescribed purpose, goal, or telos guiding it or measuring its progress, development, or growth). An experiment with language that does not negate and does not have a destiny opens speaking up to its own potentiality to be spoken, speakability, or communicability. This is the infancy in speech that P4C presupposes but does not theorize.

Here are several examples drawn from Agamben's work that throw into relief the experience of speakability. Commenting on the work of poet Giovanni Pascoli who was fascinated by dead languages, Agamben theorizes that "thought lives off the death of words."⁷ But what is a dead word? It is a word that, when heard, sounds like a word but does not convey any specific meaning. Dead words, writes Agamben, "signify without signification."⁸ Although dead, such words signify the potentiality to signify. Let loose from any determinate function or meaning, what dead words give us is the experience of language as such, of a

pure language. In this strange way, the death of words and their infancy come to correspond in a state of indistinction.

We might also recall Agamben's analysis of *glossolalia* or speaking in a foreign tongue. Agamben writes, "If I utter words whose meaning I do not understand, he who speaks in me, the voice that utters them, the very principle of speech in me, will be something barbarous, something that does not know how to speak and that does not know what it says. To-speak-in-gloss is thus to experience in oneself barbarian speech, speech that one does not know; it is to experience an 'infantile' speech ... in which understanding is 'unfruitful'."⁹ *Glossolalia* does not lend itself to understanding but rather to the pure experience of language as a potentiality for meaning, a pure potentiality for translation without being translated.

While Agamben finds these experiments with language important and interesting, they are also limited. As articulated in the introduction of this book, language (in Western philosophy) is founded on negation. Dead languages can only experience the potentiality of language through death, and speaking in a foreign tongue can only happen through the assumption of barbarism. In poetry, we can experience the appearance of language as a pure means, but to do so is, for Agamben, to experience the letter of poetry as a "place of death."¹⁰ This is a major problem as it founds infancy on negation rather than affirmation. As such, Agamben poses the question: "Can there be speech, poetry, and thought beyond the letter, beyond the death of the voice and the death of language?"¹¹ This would be an experiment with language that takes up the infancy found in dead languages and *glossolalia* but does not replicate yet another form of death.

One such experience might be found in Agamben's theory of babbling. For Agamben, babbling is a unique linguistic experiment in the pure appearance of language that does not appear to be predicated on a negation or on death. Instead, it is predicated on natality and birth. The "babble of infancy"¹² should not be taken strictly as biological or developmental in nature as a state out of which the "adult" emerges equipped with a grammar that ensures communication. Indeed, the babble of infancy is always with us in those moments when we are seized upon by the happening of language (its very speakability) as it interrupts and suspends the smooth communication of any given content or message. Connecting babble back with our previous discussion of rules in Chapter 2 we can offer the following definition of babble: speech that speaks its own rules of possibility, therefore repotentializing itself for new use. And in so speaking these rules (making its own potentiality its content), babble exposes us to the infantile potentiality of language. Babble is not reducible to the rules but rather is the speech that speaks the rules of its own speakability, or the speech that

interrupts and suspends its communicative function by exposing its origins. Exposure opens up language to an experiment through use (an adventure, as we will see below). And in this sense, babble is beyond (or perhaps before) cursing and blessing, which always split language from itself (or thinking from speaking and speaking from thinking).

This emphasis on babbling also connects with Agamben's notes on jargon. In much of political theory, language has been tied to the identity of a people. State, people, and language are knotted together, presupposing one another in a mutual set of dependencies. Yet stateless people, such as the Romani, trouble this knot. From the perspective of governmentality and the State, they do not qualify as a "people" nor do they have a "language." Instead they have only a jargon. The historical remedy to the perplexing status of the Romani people and their so-called jargon is to either (a) exclude them from political and social recognition or (b) erase their jargon through national language and grammar. The first strategy has led to erasure while the second to assimilation. Yet Agamben argues that there is a third option: suspending grammar and thus return *all* languages to their origin in jargon or babble, revealing how the ethnic biases against the Romani as somehow lacking language actually reveal how no people *have* language. Thus, babble is not the exception but the rule—a linguistic experience of infancy that remains active in all languages despite attempts to rigorously separate *phone* from *logos* through the institutionalization and standardization of grammar. The model here is Dante, who presented all languages as babble or *vulgare illustre*. But this would also mean that all people are Romani, without a destiny, an identity, a language, and without a nation. According to Agamben, this is not a negative state of being but rather liberatory in that "languages are the jargons that hide the pure experience of language."¹³ The task at hand is not transforming jargon/babble into grammars or territorializes peoples into state-bounded identities (as in a colonialist project). It is rather the opposite: releasing the babbling of language so that it can reveal the potentiality of language to be spoken (its anarchic infancy).

In all three experiences—confronting dead languages, speaking a foreign language one does not understand, and babbling—what is at stake is an experiment with language that attempts to expose communicability without communicating anything beyond itself (such as an identity, an essence, and so forth). It would be incorrect to read these three cases as simply inarticulate speech (nonsense). Indeed, one could not experience the mediality of language (its communicative potentiality) if we only had pure nonsense to work with. The key to understanding Agamben's language experiment is that it happens on the margin of language and nonlanguage, sense and nonsense, *phone* and *logos*. Given that infancy happens in every speech act, the experience of infancy can

only be made within the context of meaningful speech/language. Only then can a people experience the margin that is present whenever they speak and take up this margin as containing the potentiality for new use.

As with P4C, in a P4I session, thinking and speaking once again cross paths, but there is a difference. In the community of inquiry, speaking seeks to become rationally transparent so that thought can be thought. And in so doing *speaking disappears*. Thus, speaking falls silent at the very moment when thought appropriates it as a tool to communicate how reasonableness has been learned or is being learned. But in P4I, the emphasis shifts so that speaking can be thought, and as such, does not disappear into the background. Instead of speaking as a means to an end outside of itself (the conveyance of learning), thought finds itself when it falls into the silence of pure speaking (babble). This means that thinking speaking's speakability always returns us to infancy, as a threshold that both separates and joins thought and language. We can hear speaking's speakability when children suddenly say, "Wow, what did I just say?" or "I am not sure I understand what I am saying, but I am saying it anyway!"

Whereas P4C has as its goal the communication of specific kinds of speech, procedures, and grammars, P4I presses up against that which is presupposed by such communication: communicability. And it finds such an ability in the very thing that P4C sees as an obstacle or at least as a problem to be negated through learning certain skills and dispositions: babbling. When students start to babble, the facilitator of the community of inquiry is compelled to intervene in order to keep the dialogue "on track" toward achieving a desired goal: the effective and efficient use of reason—hence Lipman's early interest in organizing speech patterns and instituting philosophical grammars (laws) through dialogue. And yet such a pedagogical desire sutures over the aporia of infancy/communicability too quickly, missing the uniqueness of the experience of infancy and its educational importance within the babbling of the community. By letting idle the movement toward reasonable speech (its recodification in terms of philosophical grammar), the secret of speech (its speakability) is encountered in the form of babbling (speech that does not function by laws so much as exposes us to the potentiality for use). And this is barbarous (profane) as it is infantile (inappropriate).

Community of Infancy and Studious Play

In this section we will argue that P4I engages in a particular kind of activity: studious play. Given the emphasis in traditional P4C on cultivating reasonableness,

it is surprising that Lipman also emphasized connections between philosophy and playfulness. With Sharp, he writes, “Children’s philosophical practice may take many forms” including the spontaneous “play of ideas.”¹⁴ Lipman also argues that intellectual thought is not the opposite of play. Indeed, the intellect offers up “its own forms of play.”¹⁵ But a community of inquiry is not mere play. Instead it has its own form of play. While it may have playful qualities, it is also educationally directed toward a specific goal (reasonableness) and guided by a teacher (who offers questions to help the students grow, develop, or progress toward this goal). Just as the kinds of speech in P4C are not mere babble, so too the “work” done in the P4C session is not mere playground gaming around. The free play of ideas encouraged in P4C is structured, as we have indicated previously, by certain procedural and linguistic laws. Play is made operative by aligning it with the laws of learning and the laws of reasonableness.

We agree with Lipman that philosophy and play are *not* binary opposites. But our concern is that his articulation of the two sacrifices the adventure of education, which he also desires to preserve. Taking up his problematic, we hope to redeem adventure through Agamben’s concept of studious play, which resists both the ritualized and law-abiding behaviors of everyday life of the classrooms and the excesses of the playground but in such a way that the law of learning is not reinstituted so much as suspended. This suspension of the law of learning (in accordance with the sanctity of reasonableness) enables the adventure of infancy to happen through the babble of P4I. Once again drawing on Agamben’s work, we can see how a community of infancy offers an outside space within the space of the classroom: a space where thinking and speaking can meet once again *without sacrifice*. At stake in saving P4C from learning imperatives and measurable outcomes is precisely the preservation of the freedom found in the space and time of studious play that students encounter when they babble.

Agamben argues that play and ritual are two forms of human activity defined in relation to time. According to Agamben, “ritual fixes and *structures* the calendar; play, on the other hand ... changes and *destroys* it.”¹⁶ Ritual is a process of continual reenactment of predefined and predetermined actions or ways of being. Play, on the other hand, concerns itself with the opening up of time outside of the cyclic nature of the ritual. To take up an object as a toy is to suspend its value and to play with it. Play is a kind of suspension of ends or of predetermined functions that are set by the normative pressures of ritual. As Agamben argues, play opens a “new dimension of use” that “is not limited to abolishing the form of separation in order to regain an uncontaminated use that lies either beyond or before it,”¹⁷ but rather a use that activates through deactivation. Thus for

Agamben, new potentialities are opened up through deactivation within play. Think of a toy: a miniaturized truck, for instance, deactivates the functionality of the truck as a tool for transporting goods and thus opens the form of the truck up to new uses. The form is not negated or destroyed or simply affirmed. Rather the form is decoupled from the function via miniaturization as a tactic of suspension. The resulting toy is an inoperative object that is *truck-like* and can be played with.

Two extremes must be avoided. The first is a collapse of time into what Claude Levi-Strauss would refer to as “cold societies” wherein ritual dominates over play. In this extreme, we reach a truly static society, frozen in time, mummified in a perpetually claustrophobic present. Laws of behavior dominate to the point that human action is negated (as in totalitarian countries). On the other extreme, we have “hot societies” of endless play that trump all rituals and submit them to the rush and excitement of constant invention. On an educational level, we can draw a distinction between the ritualized classrooms of high-stakes testing, which are cold and indifferent and the playground, which is a place of hot events. If one extreme concerns the drudgery of seemingly endless communication of what needs to be learned to pass the test then the other concerns the excitement of continually producing new possibilities without the need to conform to predetermined ends dictated by “adults.” One communicates laws and procedures while the other communicates what is potentially new, contingent, and playfully disruptive. One concerns the maintenance of what has been signified as important to know and the other opens a space for the flow of new signifiers. Notice the cut within language that is enacted in this dichotomy: there is a division between sanctified speech (of the classroom) and blasphemy (of the playground). Lipman hopes to somehow articulate the two societies through P4C. The goal is neither ritualized thinking (rote learning) nor spontaneous babble (playground talk not appropriate for classrooms). But what he misses in his articulation is what *underlies* and *supports* both while also not being reducible to either: infantile speech. This is the potentiality that makes possible cold and hot societies. Missing infancy, Lipman turns to the laws of reasonableness to help guide babble back toward what is sanctified. He does not discount the playfulness of speaking or thinking that children engage in. Indeed, he sees it as an important connection between childhood and philosophy, thus acting as a kind of justification for P4C as a practice. Yet in the end, it is precisely the cold laws of reasonableness that dictate what can be heard as speech and how such speech can mature into a well-reasoned, ethical, and democratic life.

Agamben seems to gesture toward another possibility when he points out certain social activities that are neither mere rituals nor mere games, and as such make infancy appear. He writes that funerary and initiation rites “do not entirely fit into either the schema of ritual nor that of play, but seem to partake of both.”¹⁸ Another such “ceremony” might also be Agamben’s brief comments concerning “studious play.” Unlike mere ritual, studious play is not bound to the laws of speaking and thinking, but unlike mere play, what is at stake is not the production of new uses and meanings so much as the potentiality for such uses and meanings making itself present. In Agamben’s book *Profanations*, it is not play *as such* that is endorsed. Following his analysis of play, Agamben immediately states the following: “It [profanation] is the sort of use that Benjamin must have had in mind when he wrote of Kafka’s *The New Attorney* that the law that is no longer applied but only studied is the gate to justice.”¹⁹ Commenting further on Benjamin’s reflections on Kafka, Agamben continues:

In the Kafka essay, the enigmatic image of a law that is studied but no longer practiced corresponds, as a sort of remnant, to the unmasking of mythico-juridical violence effected by pure violence. There is, therefore, still a possible figure of law after its nexus with violence and power has been deposed, but it is a law that no longer has force or application, like the one in which the “new attorney,” leafing through “our old books,” buries himself in study, or like the one that Foucault may have had in mind when he spoke of a “new law” that has been freed from all discipline and all relation to sovereignty.²⁰

Suspended, the book (and its laws and traditions) that is studied is deactivated, no longer in force, and thus open to studious play. In this sense, it is not play but rather the relation between play and study that is most important. Summarizing, Agamben writes, “And this studious play is the passage that allows us to arrive at that justice that one of Benjamin’s posthumous fragments defines as state of the world in which the world appears as a good that absolutely cannot be appropriated or made juridical.”²¹ *Studious play* is therefore neither simply play nor lawful ritual but rather the zone of indistinction that lies between the two, separating and conjoining them. It is a zone of contact wherein ritual and play pass through one another without necessarily merging into a synthetic unity of opposites. Nor does one come to define the other (as in Lipman’s model). Rather studious play is a kind of hinge that deactivates both play and ritual long enough so that infancy emerges between them.

On our account, a community of infancy is an example of dialogic studious play with language’s potentiality that is made possible in moments of

suspension. Rules can suddenly be contemplated, and in such contemplation, their determining function can be suspended. The inoperativity opens the rules up for free use through further studious play. In this sense, studious play is an interruption of the time of ritualized learning that dominates schooling practices today in which thinking and speaking are separated. It also does not simply reunite them by subjecting one (playful babble) to the other (law of reasonableness). Studious play offers a kind of inoperative “time out” from the ritualistic reproduction of speaking as confirmation, explanation, or illustration of learning while at the same time postponing any pronouncement on the fate of what language (now reconstructed according to the grammar of philosophy and the law of reasonableness) ought to be. But it is not the purely spontaneous and unpredictable play of the playground either. If the playground emphasizes continual production of events, P4I concerns itself with the origins (infancy) of such production. In this sense, it is a kind of messianic remnant of education that is neither the chronological time of learning and assessing nor the ludic time of pure events in the playground. The problem with the community of inquiry—as Lipman originally theorized it—is that it parasitically depends upon infancy while disavowing it (it negates the communicability of babble while nevertheless employing such communicability as a resource for its ends), and in this gesture, aligns itself with the time of ritualized learning: skills and dispositions are to be learned for a future function within a democratic society. The risk of interruption is exchanged for yet another progressive instrumentalization of infancy. What is lost is precisely the experience of thinking speakability without any preconceived notion of what this otherwise might be in advance of the more basic and fundamental experience of its own potentiality. In this sense, to experience a community of infancy is precisely to rupture the logic of ritual and play that defines the most extreme polarities of the educational experience today. Studious play differs from learning in that there is no law that can maintain a sense of growth, development, or progress toward something beyond itself (reasonableness). All that remains is a speaking that turns thought toward its own conditions of possibility: infancy.

The Adventure of Thinking Speaking/Speaking Thinking

The studious play that is opened up through the babbling of a community of infancy is also equally an adventure! By speaking that which is (un)speakable (infancy), the community studiously plays with its own potentiality to speak

without foundation in a predetermined law. Speaking and thinking without foundation is a true adventure. For Agamben, the modern era has devalued and distorted the original notion of adventure. This modern appropriation reduces adventure to nothing more than an individual who happens to be subjected to a series of externally imposed and seemingly contingent obstacles that must be overcome in order to achieve fame and fortune. Adventure thus takes on the form of something radically external or eccentric to everyday life. According to Agamben, nothing could be further from the intended meaning of adventure in medieval, chivalric poetry (a meaning that, for Agamben, has an underground existence in modern philosophy). Most importantly for our purposes, Agamben highlights the odd ambiguity in the word “adventure,” which simultaneously refers to *both* an event and a tale or description of the event. Drawing on definitions offered by Jacob Grimm, Agamben points out how “it is not always easy to distinguish between the event and its transposition into words.”²² The adventure, in this sense, does not chronologically precede the story. The telling constitutes the event *as* event. Through the adventure, which is *simultaneously lived and told*, “life and language merge.”²³ The location of the adventure is betwixt and between speech and event. It is in the fissure that divides and conjoins them together. Adventure is paradoxical. Both active (something that is pursued) and passive (something that afflicts), it is that which we resolutely take a stand on but also abandon ourselves to without reservations. The adventure carries us away, takes us up, and in so doing affects us but only insofar as we actively speak it.

The event-side of adventure is always an experience of the advent of language, of speaking. The true event is, as Agamben says, an “event of language.”²⁴ This is precisely why adventure cannot be distinguished from the speech that speaks it. What demands to be said is not a specific content but rather the speakability of speech itself. In Agamben’s words, the event as the sayable is “something neither merely linguistic nor merely factual; according to an ancient source, it is in between thought and the thing, speech and the world.”²⁵ The thing of language is “its pure sayability, its happening.”²⁶ One can instantly see how the indeterminacy between event and speech in an adventure gives rise to an experience of infancy. An adventure, to be precise, is an experiment with language that enables the event of speaking to be thought through speech. As such, it reconnects thought and speech but in such a way that speech is not reduced to a mere instrument of thought articulating itself.

The subject of adventure has shifted over time. It begins with the medieval knight, who is replaced by the artist. The artist is then eclipsed by the philosopher, or perhaps the poetic philosopher. The quintessential example of the latter is,

of course, Heidegger, and his theory of *Ereignis*, which Agamben translates as adventure. The intricacies of Agamben's argument do not concern us here, rather, what we would like to emphasize is how this turn to philosophy opens up the space in Agamben's thoughts of adventure for P4I to enter. The babbling of the community is an adventure in infancy. The educational logic of such babbling is studious play with the very speakability of language as such. Such studious play is not merely melancholic but is rather passionately committed to an adventure. It stumbles upon the rules defining its speakability, and in turn, neutralizes them enough to open them up to free use (beyond cursing and blessing).

The adventure of studious play helps us rethink Lipman's characterization of P4C as "following the argument where it leads."²⁷ This injunction safeguards against teachers predetermining a set destination and encourages participants to set aside their predetermined assumptions and go down the path that inquiry takes them. They must, in a sense, surrender themselves to the quest. Lipman emphasizes that the teacher does not prioritize which argument or which direction students should follow. This emerges from what he refers to as the situation, which has unique qualities characteristic of a particular community. We agree with Lipman, but we want to make a distinction. Direction might emerge from within the community, but in Lipman's model, this direction itself is always guided by a certain *destiny*, which rests on the tried and true laws of reasonableness. The community might choose its own direction but not the laws, which dictate *how* this direction will be pursued. P4I suspends and renders inoperative the laws of destiny, and in so doing, "following the argument where it leads" becomes more adventurous.

P4I and the Mystery of Education

Where does this adventure lead us? Without a destiny to guarantee its course, does adventure have a clear directionality? Adventure is, as Agamben reminds us, something "whose outcome is difficult to predict."²⁸ Indeed, it resists being oriented toward a definitive end or cognitive closure. Even romantic adventures that seem to be guided by the protagonists' quests for particular objects—such as the Maltese falcon in John Huston's film of the same name or Rosebud the childhood sled in Orson Well's *Citizen Kane*—leave these objects behind, or at least their mysterious auras. At stake in Agamben's various philosophical adventures is not something sacred or mysterious. Instead, it is something simple, profane, and immediate. He writes, "At issue here is not a secret doctrine or a

higher science, nor a knowledge that we do not know.”²⁹ It is rather our infancy that is behind the adventure. P4I (as an *experimentum linguae*, an experience of language) is the *experimentum educationis* par excellence, in that it leads us right to the inner sanctum of the “mystery” of education, revealing what cannot not be said and yet for this very reason, disappears. In the following passage from *Infancy and History*, Agamben juxtaposes the concepts of “fable/fairy tale” and “mystery” (ritual), to argue that it is not “mystery,” as we may think, but rather the fable that “contains the truth of infancy as man’s source of origin.”³⁰

This is why it is the fable, something which can only be narrated, and not the mystery, which must not be spoken of, which contains the truth of infancy as man’s source of origin. For in the fairy tale man [*sic*] is freed from the mystery’s obligation of silence by transforming it into enchantment: it is not participation in a cult of knowledge which renders him speechless, but bewitchment. The silence of the mystery is undergone as a rupture, plunging man [*sic*] back into the pure, mute language of nature; but as a spell, silence must eventually be shattered and conquered.³¹

Applying this passage to P4I and its role in education, we could say that the “mystery” of education is the “cult of knowledge that renders [human/students] speechless.” What is important to highlight here is how knowledge (thinking) and speaking are separated from one another. This separation leads to a sense of mystery: speech that cannot know, and thought that cannot speak. Educational equivalents of this situation can be found in the separation of thinking and speaking introduced at the beginning of this chapter (confirmation, explanation, and/or illustration). In such cases, a void is created separating one from the other that must not (or cannot) be spoken of. In education, the teacher’s Voice is often the solution to suturing over the gap. But this solution is inadequate, as this Voice merely reinscribes the very negativity, which it is meant to somehow plaster over.

The fable, on the other hand, that “contains the truth of infancy as man’s [*sic*] source of origin” stands for P4I as that activity within the school where “man [*sic*] is freed from the mystery’s obligation of silence by transforming it into enchantment.” That which was unspeakable (language’s origin, its infancy) is spoken in the fable. Or more aptly, language’s unspeakable infancy cannot *not* be spoken in the fable. The fable is a response to a demand of language. Rather than silence this demand, it passes fully into language, which now exhibits its own potentiality in the form of a fable that has no end, that has no foundation, and that is truly infantile. In this way, the silence that was perceived to be external

to language—and thus mysterious—returns to language as its radical interiority. The negative foundations for the mystery are overcome by the advent of a new birth that is purely positive and affirmative, taken up in the adventure of speaking with others in a community of infancy. The passage continues:

This is why, in the fairy tale, man [*sic*] is struck dumb, and animals emerge from the pure language of nature in order to speak. Through the temporary confusion of the two spheres, it is the world of the open mouth, of the Indo-European root *bha (from which the word fable is derived), which the fairy tale validates, against the world of the closed mouth, of the root *mu.³²

Like the fable and the fairy tale, P4I allows for an experience of infancy that is between animal *phone* and human *logos* without sacrificing either. It is a state where speaking knows itself through its origin in nonspeaking, and where knowledge only speaks itself through the non-knowledge of babble. The indistinction that holds the two poles together is a place of studious play and of adventurous experimentation.

Perhaps we can return here to Lipman's "children's novel" *Pixie*. As pointed out in the introduction to this chapter, *Pixie* can be read as an adventure that, in the end, discovers language. While the main focus of the novel concerns the main character, Pixie, and her exploration of logical, social, familial, aesthetic, causal, and mathematical relationships is the relationship between another character, Brian, and language that is most interesting to us. In the novel, Brian might have stopped talking to other human beings, but he did not stop talking to animals. Indeed, through his experience with a giraffe during a trip to a zoo, Brian discovers speech once again—not how to properly speak but rather speech itself. As such, *Pixie* is a fable focused on the point of infancy that separates and conjoins humans and nonhuman animals. The zoo in the story becomes a kind of crib for cultivating Brian's sense of infancy, or the speakability of speech that only comes through contact with (rather than sacrifice of) the *phone* of other nonhuman animals around him. His silence is therefore not negative but rather positive. It is not meant for human ears; it is a kind of babble that exists between humans and animals without being reducible to either. Furthermore, Brian's silence does not simply disappear once he begins speaking with fellow students. Silence remains within speech, returning it to its origin in infancy. While Pixie, the character, is offered as a model of philosophical inquiry by Lipman, it is to Brian that we must turn in order to get a sense of the real adventure at stake in philosophy. In fact, Pixie's loss of infancy is proportional to her fascination with the increasing mystery of thinking. This mystery shrouds the more basic

and fundamental experience of language that Brian hits upon. In short, *Pixie* is, philosophically speaking, a fabulous adventure (rather than a novel).

This adventure is not motivated by a mystery. Indeed, there is no secret that Brian discovers. There is nothing to be learned (no skills or values to be cultivated). Instead, there is only exposure to that which is closest yet easiest to forget: infancy or speakability. Infancy returns thought to language and language to thought without sacrificing one for the other. Through fables, through parables, through babble, this infancy makes itself present in speech and thus available for studious play. What is the directionality of the adventure of P4I? Where does it lead when it has no destiny? Nowhere but to itself. Lipman's characterization of adventure as containing at its heart a mystery turns out to be nothing other than speaking's infancy (which is not much of a mystery after all). The "secret" of one's life intimated by Lipman is not a deep essence encapsulated within a dream that must be excavated through heroic pursuit, but rather glides on the surface of language (through the manner of our speaking) as a constant reminder that the risk of adventure is never far from home, but is rather found in the smallest and most intimate of places (cribs, for instance).

Adventure and Love

Agamben points out that "the one who ventures into the event undoubtedly loves, trembles, and is moved."³³ Love and adventure cross paths: both are active and passive and both are locked within the rhythmic sway between pursuit and abandonment. Thinking and speaking are able to become erotically entwined without sacrificing one for the other. This is an adventure in thinking as much as it is an adventure in speaking. It is important to remember that the origin of adventure is found in chivalric poetry. How does philosophy—and P4I—take up this chivalric origin? How does it find love, without mystery and without sanctity, in and through babbling study and studious play? Get ready for an adventure.