

Deictic Dialectics:

A Practice in Constructed Philosophical Conversation

Players: 6-10

Time: ~60 minutes

General Aim: Everyone is working together in service of the conversation – a conversation that keeps changing, that is never settled, that is always fluid and becoming. The conversation is somewhat akin to a delicate animal that needs nurturing and food and attention and love. All decisions made in the entire performance are done with a deep sense of care for the development of this conversation creature – only together can we infuse our dialogue with importance, urgency, curiosity, complexity, play.

General Note on Rules: The conversation rules for each game are meant as a center that can be adhered to, but need not be adhered to rigidly. You are encouraged to find an aesthetic and dynamic interplay between rule following and rule breaking.

Materials: Small booklets of paper and markers (1 for each player), chairs (1 for each player), table, podium (or music stand) portable keyboard connected to a computer connected to a projector, xeroxed copies of one paragraph of a philosophical text (1 for each player), timer/stopwatch, Objects for Game 1 – stuffed animal, fabric, skull, old book, jacket (these can be substituted for other objects if needed)

GAME 1

Instructions	Notes
<p>(0) Each player is sitting back to back in the center of a room, in silence, reading from a xeroxed page of philosophical text, reading and thinking until someone says a word from the text. This word is then repeated by everyone 3 times.</p> <p>CAMP- Backs to each other, rapid generation of thought, disregarding rules of politeness and interrupting each other whenever one feels like speaking.</p> <p>WALKING - All walk around the room, muttering to oneself trying to make sense of things that were said, REALLY thinking, but doing it sotto voce.</p> <p>OBJECTS - One at a time people take an object from a table and sit down in the center of the room and adopt the object's corresponding role and conversational directives. The first role chosen must be the lecturer. The last role chosen must be the archivist. In every round</p> <p>LECTURER <i>Soft/thin fabric-</i> gives monologues (until with others, then they become a conversationalist)</p> <p>LIBRARIAN <i>Stuffed animal-</i> connects thoughts to examples, persons, other ideas/concepts</p> <p>ENCYCLOPEDIAS <i>Book-</i> asking/supplying definitions of terms and giving clarifications</p> <p>ARCHIVIST <i>Keyboard</i> writing down important thoughts, such that they are not lost</p> <p>QUESTIONER <i>Skull-</i> can only ask questions</p> <p>PHILOSOPHER <i>Jacket-</i> attempting to disclose foundational questions/issues, ontological, epistemological, aesthetic, trying to "meta" the conversation</p>	<p>The person who said this word initiates the transition out of this round by choosing to stand up</p> <p>The text is meant as a prompt for conversation and doesn't need to be adhered to rigidly.</p> <p>Chose a path and stick to it. The trajectory of walking around should convey that you are actually thinking.</p> <p>The movement to take an object should be decisive, as should be the walk to the table. Once the object is chosen, begin your utterance while walking to the center thereby interrupting the people talking.</p> <p>For the people who are still walking around while the conversation in the center is going on, your role is to listen to the conversation while simultaneously giving your own thoughts, view opinions (sotto voce).</p>

SEQUENCING / TRANSITIONS / TIMINGS

ROUND	TRANSITION TO NEXT ROUND	TIMING (approximate)
0-SILENCE W/ QUOTES	After word is spoken 3 times	2 minutes
1-CAMP	Person who spoke initial word decides to stand	3 minutes
2-WALKING	Someone decides to be a lecturer	3 minutes
3-OBJECTS	The archivist (w/ the keyboard) sits down	1-2 minutes prior to each interruption
4-CAMP	The archivist decides to stand up and continues writing at a podium. Objects are re-set on the table.	3 minutes
5-WALKING	The archivist returns the keyboard and they take the fabric and become the lecturer, sitting down in the center of the room, reading their notes on the screen. Once they finish reading the text, they can improvise a monologue until the next player sits down with an object.	3 minutes
6-OBJECTS	The archivist (w/ the keyboard) sits down	1-2 minutes prior to each interruption
7-CAMP	The archivist decides to stand up and continues writing at a podium. Objects are re-set on the table.	3 minutes
8-WALKING	At this point the archivist is the only one writing, and then reading aloud their notes. As soon as the archivist begins reading aloud the notes everyone begins setting up GAME 2, choosing their roles, getting into position, and waiting until the archivist stops speaking and then begins GAME 2. The archivist of GAME 1 becomes the Question-Master of GAME 2.	3 minutes

NOTE ON THE ARCHIVIST -- The archivist begins their role when everyone else has entered CAMP mode. They continue their role throughout the next WALKING mode as well. During this time they should be sorting through the conversation and trying to make sense of the totality by drawing things together and making connections

GAME 2

Instructions	Notes
<p><u>2 chairs in the center</u> Conversationalist (2ppl) - Conversing (all other instructions will be given imminently)</p> <p><u>Second Ring (slowly circumambulating, words burst out)</u> Clarifiers (2ppl) - MAIN ROLE - repeat lines (inquisitively & enthusiastically) AND can say the following: “Can you repeat x?” “Can you say that again but differently?” “What do you mean by x?” “I’m not sure I understand x” “Can you say that again in 5 words?” “Wow, X sounds super interesting, can you say more about that?”</p> <p><u>Third Ring (standing on chairs)</u> Question-Master (1ppl) - Three Main Roles -Prod center of circle conversationalists to re-tie in the conversation to the given Question OR Determine a new question which deepens the conversation. -Call for roles to switch (during role switch, the Question-Master stays the same) -Taking notes on key ideas spoken, important shifts in the conversation (using the keyboard)</p> <p>Dramaturg (1ppl) - Prod center of circle conversations to alter the modality of their speech. You can say the following: -Less/More from Person X -More gaps in speaking/silences -Faster paced interruptions / Longer statements -More/less hand gestures -Speak with: enthusiasm, curiosity, criticality, certitude, uncertainty, ambiguity -Speak louder/softer -Use less/more jargon -Sit, Stand -Hold hands, hold heads, hold shoulders, -One person sing quietly -Move closer, Move farther away -Close eyes, Open Eyes</p>	<p>Conversationalists don’t need to stop your conversation, but do take heed (somewhat) to what is spoken to you (especially if it comes from the third ring)</p> <p>The movements of the clarifiers should be natural and yet also inquisitive. You are really thinking, and questioning, and wondering. Sometimes seated, sometimes crouched, sometimes pacing, sometimes circumambulating, usually staying close to the conversationalists.</p> <p>The question-master has a timer/clock which they are checking to see how long Game 2 should last. (and how long each round should last).</p> <p>Be careful dramaturg -- you have the most potential (more than any point in the entire game) to derail the conversation. Make sure that all your decisions are in service of the conversation.</p>

SEQUENCING / TRANSITIONS / TIMINGS

ROUND	TRANSITION TO NEXT ROUND	TIMING (approximate)
First Iteration	Question-Master calls for roles to switch (this is done by saying the name of the role or the persons in the role)	5 mins
<i>Transition - 30 seconds of silence</i>		
Second Iteration	<i>ibid</i>	5 mins
<i>Transition - 30 seconds of silence</i>		
Third Iteration	<i>ibid</i>	5 mins
<i>Transition - 30 seconds of silence</i>		
Fourth Iteration	During this round the Question-Master is calling out conversational centering-topics much more frequently/frenetically, and as this occurs the clarifiers and the dramaturg likewise increase the frequency of their instructions. This increases in craziness and frenetic-ness until the game begins breaking down. At a high point of intensity, the Question-Master QUICKLY puts his keyboard on the card table and moves the table to the center of the room, and everyone moves their chairs into position for GAME 3 and gets the cards and markers. As soon as everyone is seated the game begins.	5 mins

GAME 3

Instructions	Notes
<p>All seated around table. Each player has a stack of cards. The game begins as each player thinks back to all the topics / subject matters from the entire performance. The initial task is to generate one question that unifies (coheres) the entirety of the topics of thought that were discussed. Everyone writes this down on a card.</p> <p>Everyone looks around at each other to see that everyone has finished writing. Then one person places their card on the table face up and reads it aloud. Then things progress (clockwise) with each player reading their card aloud and placing it on the table until all cards are placed.</p> <p>Once all cards are placed, players look around at each other, readying their pen caps, ready to cast a vote on which topic they want to explore (i.e. which card is worthy of conversation). Then, all at the same time, pen caps are cast on the card of choice, each casting their vote. (if there is a tie, the two which tied are re-voted on).</p> <p>As soon as the vote is cast, the pen caps are pushed aside slightly, and a cacophonous conversation builds and builds and builds, slowly, until it reaches a maximum level of intensity and volume. This occurs in 3 stages:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Players sit back in their chair and speak softly2) Players sit upright and speak regularly3) Players stand up and speak loudly <p>Then the player whose card was chosen sits down, and this cues everyone to advance to the next round which mimics these instructions precisely except for the guiding thought behind what is written on the card (see below). The player who sits down, takes the keyboard writes down the content of the card that was chosen, and then joins the rest of the players in the next round.</p>	

SEQUENCING / TRANSITIONS / TIMINGS

ROUND	TRANSITION TO NEXT ROUND	TIMING (approximate)
Central Question - A central question that links the entirety of the conversation prior	Sitting down after standing w/ a rising intensity	2 mins
Sub-Question - A question which deepens the chosen "central question"	ibid	2 mins
Answer - An answer to the "sub-question"	ibid	2 mins
Clarification - A clarification of that answer	ibid	2 mins
Final Word -a final word that concretizes that clarification	Instead of building the rising intensity for this round, once the final word is voted on all players repeat that word 3 times and then the performance is finished.	2 mins