

Ethics in Progress Quarterly • ethicsinprogress.org • Volume 2 (2011) • Issue 2 • pp. 23–45

“How Much Truth Can a Spirit Dare?” Nietzsche’s “Ethical” Truth Theory as an Epistemic Background for Philosophizing with Children

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1. Autonomy through Concept Formation: the Socratic Element

Philosophizing, according to Ekkehard Martens, can be seen as an elemental cultural technology, like arithmetic or writing, which both can and should be acquired in childhood. Martens is proposing here an understanding of philosophy that attributes value not only to the content canon, but also to the process itself, as Wittgenstein, for one, also did when he stated in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, “Philosophy is not a doctrine, but an activity.” For Socrates, this activity consisted in “giving an account of ourselves, our knowledge, our way of life.” (Plato, 2008a, 187d). In Nietzsche’s view, the precondition for this kind of accounting is the personal capacity for self-distancing, which allows us to grasp our quite individual primal experiences of emotion, perception, sudden illuminations of insight, and so on, as general concepts and logical structures.

“Let us think [...] of the formation of concepts: every word at once becomes an idea by having not just to serve as a kind of reminder for the unique and entirely individualized original experience to which it owes its genesis, but also to fit countless more or less similar cases; strictly speaking, cases that are not the same, or in other words, an assortment of altogether unequal cases. Every concept arises from

the equation of that which is not equal.” (Nietzsche, KSA1, p. 879. „For Nietzsche, however, the non-identity of subject and object in no way means the lack of any mediation between them”, see Schmidt 1996). And, further:

The human individual [...] as a *rational* being now subjects his actions to the rule of abstraction [...] he first generalizes all these impressions to less colorful, cooler concepts in order to harness them to the wagon of his life and actions. Everything that distinguishes humans from animals depends on this ability to diffuse visual metaphors into a schema, that is, to dissolve an image into a concept. (Nietzsche, KSA1, p. 881)

Philosophizing with Children addresses the need to acquire this competency by focusing attention on working with concepts. Barbara Brüning, however, unlike Matthew Lipman, does not place analytical thinking—which is acquired in public school instruction—in the foreground of in her practical work, but rather the “expansion of the conceptual repertoire.” Here she tries to work inductively or deductively with six-year-olds in a “cooperative process of reflection,” using concepts like life and death, idea and thing, or thinking and dreaming, “which go beyond the realm of what is concrete to the senses. We try to discover the characteristics summarized in these concepts and use them to develop our ability to imagine.” (Brüning, 1984, p. 24)

In order for this philosophically indispensable struggle for the concept to succeed, Hans-Joachim Werner has suggested, one needs to see “alterity” or “mutuality” (Martin Buber) as opportunities for broadening knowledge; and so one must be attentive to the children’s interests, their world of thoughts, ideas, and emotions, in short, their life-world. With regard to concepts, this means making them accessible through illustration in various media¹:

“If you want to talk with children, say, about the basic structure of language, exemplary situations and processes in the mode of Jonathan Swift’s “Gulliver” or Peter Bichsel’s “Tisch-Geschichte” are good choices. Anyone who really gets involved on this level will often be amazed at the insights and questions that suddenly occur to the children, as for example when a boy in a course with fourth graders, during a discussion of the difference between the words “chaise” and “chair,” suddenly called into question this distinction in itself. When asked about it, he explained his doubt by suggesting that both expressions referred to the same mental picture and the same object—thus putting into words a basic problem of language that has been under discussion since the time of Plato and Aristotle.” (Werner, 1997, p. 17)

Martens credits Judy Kyle with early efforts “to make children capable of forming their own ideas about their realities, and able to think about how ideas are formed.” (Martens, 1999, p. 97) Understanding the process of concept formation and creative

¹ For this reason a comprehensive repertoire of stories and other resources for preschool, school, and private use has been developed within the framework of Philosophy for Children.

cooperation in this process lead to an increase in autonomy. For one thing, cooperative reflection on concept formation enables children to take the knowledge they already have and use it to find their bearings within a culture; but it also allows them to infuse new life into old concept schemata through a reflective approach, developing new ways of seeing that introduce new concepts and thus expand their repertoires of thought and action. In this way the children not only expand their individual images of themselves and the world, but also the culture in which they live. For this reason Martens regards "concept formation" as one of the critically important pillars of philosophizing with children. In philosophical terms, this view is based on an understanding of referentiality in which the relationship between the signified and the sign is not ontologically based, but is formed in a process of consensus. Martens points out that Plato already discussed this linguistic-philosophical position on the status of concepts in his dialogue *Kratylos*. There the protagonist Hermagones addresses the issue in this way: "for any name which you give, in my opinion, is the right one, and if you change that and give another, the new name is as correct as the old [...] for there is no name given to anything by nature; all is convention and habit of the users." (Plato, 2009a, 383a-384d)

Martens also takes subsequent arguments into account to theoretically ground practices of "children's philosophy" (these include Aristotle, John Wilson, Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker, Bertrand Russell, and most importantly, Ludwig Wittgenstein: see Martens, 1999, pp. 97-124). Since in his view the relationship between a concept and its designated object realm is not arbitrary, he suggests examining a concept's speculatively presumed breadth of tolerance using a concretely logical reality test in which the children can examine the coherence of related objects and actions associated with the concept. As an example Martens uses the often-cited table, which is defined not so much by its form as by its use, namely as something upon which one can place an object for any length of time. Seen from this angle, a large round loaf of bread on which cheese is served can be a table (Martens, 1999, pp. 103. An additional requirement: one can sit around it.), but less so a high ocean wave that by necessity supports a surfer only briefly.

Other philosophers have also emphasized that working on concepts in philosophizing with children is not a goal in itself, but serves to creatively expand self-image and worldview and also to school the kind of rational thinking that should support children's independent thinking processes and life choices. As Daniela Camhy and Ann Sharp emphasize, "In Philosophy with Children, the point is not the rote learning of factual knowledge, but rather the development of active thought. The main purpose is to help children learn how to think for themselves.

The aim is also to make them aware of their own capacities to discover, explore, infer, and to build upon these capacities." (Invitation 2006)

The most fundamental concerns of philosophers are "concepts," "rational thinking," and "reason." "What is a concept?" "What is a judgment?" "What is the place of reason?" These are questions that recur throughout the history of philosophy. And since Friedrich Nietzsche called "usefulness for life"² (2) the criterion for reason, which also includes concept formation, I would like to add his name at this point to the list of philosophers like Kant, Wittgenstein, Cassirer, or Dewey, who have been used in the past as sources for the theoretical underpinnings of philosophizing with children. As Martens also notes, "Knowledge [...] according to Nietzsche's anti-Platonic conviction, is not the inherent goal of a pure striving for truth, but rather an indispensable tool in the struggle for survival." (Martens, 2000, p. 84)

For the late Nietzsche, the concepts "survival" and "self-perpetuation" that had been popularized by Charles Darwin were only very inadequate representations of human capabilities, since they reduced humans to nothing more than the mere effort to secure continued existence. The "gear wheels of reason," he thought, should instead promote "self-expansion" or an increase in possibilities, and should help the self-aware person achieve sovereignty (Gerhardt, 1995, p. 129). This view of a practical philosophy in service to life frames Nietzsche's critique of reason, in which he distances himself from an inappropriate overestimation (Martens, 2000, p. 86) of rationality and assigns to it a constructive task.

Using Nietzsche's terminology, the goal is to discover how and to what extent reason can serve life. His epistemological point of departure presumes that when we assess the value of reason, we deceive ourselves in two ways: first in overestimating reason's ability to penetrate to the truth, second in evaluating its importance in the context of our lives. In the following, we will examine both cases and ask how Nietzsche finds these misconceptions useful for life. For Nietzsche does not necessarily see self-deception or illusion as negative, since in his view the wisdom of reason is subordinated to a higher instance: life, or the wisdom of the body. "There is a 'chemistry of ideas and feelings,' a 'developmental history of [...] concepts' that can't be separated from the existential condition of humanity. Behind the individual epistemological positions, Nietzsche sees 'consequences for valuation'; behind these stands the body as a formation more deserving of 'credence'

² In Nietzsche's early work "On the Use and Abuse of History for Life," the second of the *Untimely Meditations*, he develops as a measure of an individually meaningful attitude toward the past, against any scientific objectivity, its "*Lebensdienlichkeit*" (service to life) in which everything is measured under the aspect of its usefulness in dealing with the most important existential problems.

than everything that is merely thought. Both the feelings and perceptions of the empiricists and the *cogitationes* of the rationalists are somatically bound [...]. This affects the idea of 'pure' knowledge as a congruence of thinking and being unclouded by non-theoretical factors" (compare Gerhardt, 2000, and Schmidt, 1996, p. 128).

2. What Reason Can Accomplish: The Epistemological Perspective

Since the significance attributed to reason depends upon what it can accomplish, I will first discuss Nietzsche's untimely assessment of what reason can do. We find his most pointed illustration in his fable of the "clever beasts" who invented cognition, but had to expire after drawing only a few breaths in nature. Nietzsche calls that short span of time "the most arrogant and mendacious minute in world history." (Nietzsche, KSA1, p. 875). In his short essay *On the Pathos of Truth*, which he presented to Cosima Wagner for Christmas 1872, Nietzsche explicitly discusses the despair that comes with insight into "how miserable, how shadowy and fleeting, how aimless and arbitrary the human intellect seems within nature." Here he describes the last moments of these "clever beasts," as they realized, "to their great annoyance," shortly before their demise, "that they had understood everything wrong. They died, and in dying cursed the truth. This is how these despairing beasts were who invented cognition." (p. 759, *On the Pathos of Truth*).

How, according to Nietzsche, did this overestimation of reason come about, "that arrogance connected to cognition and feelings that descended like a blinding fog over the eyes and senses of humans and deceived them about the value of existence?" (p. 876, *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense*). In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche identifies the Greek philosopher Socrates, whom he places on the same level as Jesus and Buddha, as a key figure in this development. Socrates, by pointing the way to the "brightness of knowledge," had initiated an historic transition, a new age that saw the "new and unprecedented esteem for knowledge and insight" as its special advantage (p. 89, *The Birth of Tragedy*). This new age found its apogee in Socrates' provocation, clothed in his assertion that he alone "admitted to knowing nothing." From the resulting scrutiny of all things, Socrates drew conclusions about the "inner falsity," even "reprehensibility" of existence, and the need to "correct" it.

Thus Socrates became the forerunner of a completely different culture, art, and morality, destroying the "beautiful world" of ancient tragedy formerly marked by an inner unity of "instinct and awareness," and so inaugurating our diminished age. In Nietzsche's view, then, the overestimation of reason played a decisive role in the demise of ancient tragedy. It led to the displacement of archaic "instinctive

wisdom" (today we would say *intuitive wisdom*) that had been given in the weaving together of Dionysian and Apollonian principles in the medium of art. This conjoining was ripped apart by the work of the "new-born *daemon* named *Socrates*" (p. 83). Now the new opposition was between the *Dionysian* and *Socratic* principles. Now only the *Daimonion* of Socrates embodied a rudiment of "instinctive wisdom." But in its purely cautionary function, it limited itself to "confronting [...] conscious knowledge as a *hindrance*." Due to the "thoroughly abnormal nature" of Socrates, "instinct" as inner knowledge thus became the medium of the inner voice, the critic. Consciousness, by contrast, became "the creator". As a result, inner knowledge stood opposed to this conscious form of reason as "rationalistic method" (p. 85: „Whose highest law in something like 'everything must be reasonable to be beautiful'") advocated by Socrates, which was marked on the one hand by its clear and conceptual insight and on the other by its capacity to be rationally argued (Steinmann, 2000, p. 17). This new rationalistic way of thinking signified a "fundamental decision about the trajectory of meaning within which thinking and action are carried out. Socrates introduced the 'type of the theoretical man' (Nietzsche, KSA1, p. 98, *The Birth of Tragedy*) which has endured into the modern era and is characteristic of scientific thinking." (Steinmann, 2000, p. 15)

"Virtue is knowledge," (Nietzsche, KSA1, p. 85) is the new moral formula of Socrates. "Sin arises only from ignorance; the virtuous person is the happy person." (p. 85). However, using quotations from *Laches*, Martens demonstrates that Socrates was absolutely not engaging in "intellectualism" with his theoretical efforts, but only trying to prevent "blind actionism" by analyzing the concepts governing action (compare Martens, 1999, p. 115). Knowledge structures itself through concepts, and so it is only logical that Socrates begins by clarifying concepts. In Nietzsche's view, however, truth as the ultimate goal of reason cannot be discovered by the human intellect. Nietzsche sees Socrates' efforts at definition, intended to penetrate to essence or being, as nothing more than work on constructs and preliminary designs, and concludes that it is an error to believe that they correspond to the nature or essence of things.

In his essay "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense," Nietzsche writes: "As a genius of construction, man raises himself far above the bee in the following way: whereas the bee builds with wax that he gathers from nature, man builds with the far more delicate conceptual material which he first has to manufacture from himself." (Nietzsche, KSA1, p. 882, *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense*) Humans construct the world in which they live. We may believe we know something about things, but in the end we can only speak of them metaphorically. The "thing in itself" cannot be grasped (p. 878). To the question, "What then is truth?" Nietzsche

answers: "A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms, in short, a sum of human relations [...] Truths are illusions of which we have forgotten that they are illusions." (p. 880). For this reason Nietzsche considers declared truths anthropomorphic; they contain "not a single point that is true in itself, real, and binding" (p. 883).

Nietzsche's global statement that there is no truth can be interpreted as a warning against the metaphysical objectification of reality. We do not arrive at the essence of things with the help of language: "the entire medium in which and with which the man of truth, the researcher, the philosopher later works and constructs, originates, if not in cloud-cuckoo-land, then at any rate surely not in the essence of things." (p. 879).

From a metaphysical point of view, what we assert to be "true" corresponds to nothing (Gerhardt, 1995, p. 110). In this way Nietzsche relativizes the human ability to know through his disillusioning insight that with our human truth we cannot get beyond our own limits. Despite all our theoretical exertions we arrive at nothing worthy of the name "being." Volker Gerhardt illustrates this thought with an image: "In the final analysis we are only pointing with the finger of truth at ourselves." (p. 106) Humans thus cannot approach the truth outside themselves. "In other words, in the absolute sense there is no truth." (p. 106)

For truthseekers who know that there is no discernable truth outside themselves, acknowledging this insight leads to an attitude of mutual respect, since no one can claim to own the truth. And strictly speaking, this also implies that, in searching for answers to the "great" metaphysical questions, any all too one-sided dominance of adults over children is not valid—a conviction that is among the most basic tenets of the *Philosophizing with Children* movement (Werner, 1997, p. 18). Like adults, children point "with the finger of truth at themselves" and for that reason find answers "suited" to themselves in order to engage with one another. As a rule, though, people are unaware of their own construction process. According to Nietzsche, the intellect places itself in service to human arrogance and the pride humans take in their great capacity for knowledge. Reason, in other words, deceives us about its own capacity to deliver results.

And yet, in another context, Nietzsche finds the mind's strategy of deception completely appropriate, namely in the context of individuation and moral development. Thus, from forming the concept "freedom" humans derive their illusion that they are free. This illusion leads to moral accomplishments. People search for meaning; they give themselves laws and act in accordance with them, whereby they become self-aware individuals and take responsibility for themselves. Without this self-deception they would be held back on an animalistic

level of existence (compare Gerhardt, 1995, p. 133, and Nietzsche, KSA5, p. 293, *Genealogy of Morals*). It is for this reason, Nietzsche writes, that the intellect develops “its chief powers in deception [...] as a means to preserve the individual.” (Nietzsche, KSA1, p. 876, *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense*). Becoming human, the educational process of *morality*—through which humanity develops within the species’ history and with the help of reason from crude individuality to self-aware personhood—progresses from utilitarian considerations through the principle of honor to finally reach self-awareness or self-control:

The three stages of morality up to the present: The first sign that a beast has become human is that his behavior is no longer directed to his momentary comfort, but rather to his enduring comfort; that is, when man becomes useful, expedient: then for the first time the free rule of reason bursts forth. A still higher level is reached when man acts according to the principle of honor, by means of which he finds his place in society, submitting to commonly held feelings; this raises him high above the stage when he was guided only by personally understood expedience. Now he shows and wants to be shown respect; that is, he understands his advantage as dependent on what he thinks of others and they of him. Finally, at the highest stage of morality up until now, he acts in accordance with his standard for things and men; he himself determines for himself and others what is honorable, what is profitable. He has become the lawgiver of opinions, in accordance with the ever more refined concept of usefulness and honor. Knowledge enables him to prefer what is most useful, that is, to prefer general usefulness to personal usefulness, and the respectful recognition of common, enduring worth to prestige of the moment. He lives and acts as a collective individual. (Nietzsche, KSA2, 94, p. 91, *Human, All Too Human*)

This process of becoming human is not possible without the formation of concepts. But so that we can come to an agreement about our concepts, reason, aside from its fundamental role in deceiving the self, must also function to make a common construction process possible. For this reason, although Nietzsche regards the truths central to correspondence and coherence theories of truth as “indifferent truths” (Nietzsche, KSA1, p. 287, *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life*) consensus theory could to some extent be an exception. In his view, the intellect also makes itself useful in the “peace process” (Nietzsche, KSA1, p. 877, *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense*) between the self and others. In this, the first step is the development of a common language. In consensus, binding concepts are laid down for what will count as truth:

For now that which from this point on will count as “truth” becomes fixed; that is, a way of designating things is invented that has the same validity and force everywhere, and the legislation of language also produces the first laws of truth; for the contradiction between truth and lies comes into being here for the first time: the liar uses the valid tokens of signification to make the unreal appear real. (p. 877)

To be truthful [...] means to use the customary metaphors. (p. 881)

Since the relationship between concepts and objects is tied to human, personal attributions of meaning, concepts are not only used for promoting autonomy to serve life. Concepts, especially moral ones, can also be reinterpreted with intentions hostile to life; they can be provided with new contexts and connotations, and so on, thus hindering autonomous development by means of subtle manipulations. Thus Nietzsche points especially to the revaluation of originally "thing-oriented" concepts and the associated displacement of power, which can pave the way through its suggestive effects for the imposition of an external will. Nietzsche develops this idea in his late work *Genealogy of Morals*: "All the ideas of ancient humanity must initially be understood, to a degree we can hardly imagine, as coarse, crude, superficial, narrow, blunt, and in particular, non-symbolic. The 'pure man' is from the start simply a man who washes himself, who denies himself certain foods that cause skin diseases, [...] not much more!" (Nietzsche, KSA5, p. 264)

The revaluation of concepts, according to Nietzsche, was carried out by the ascetic priests. Unlike the warriors and ordinary people, they dedicated themselves to a way of life turned away from action that undermined their health. As a result, they invented the ascetic ideal as a remedy against their disease. Here Nietzsche includes "the whole metaphysic of the priests—so hostile to the senses, making men so indolent and sophisticated." The aristocracy's way of life, in which individuals actively expressed themselves in action, and which declared as its own ideal life-affirming behavior in the sense of an ethics of striving for virtue (ἀρετή), (Greek epics and archaic elegies represent an ethic of heroism "whose chief characteristics are practical intelligence and valor, avoiding shame and striving for renown"; Renaud, 2002) was now considered egotistical and bad. The aristocratic value equation (good = noble = powerful = beautiful = fortunate = loved by god) was reversed. Now it was the miserable ones, without even the strength to live out their needs, who were good and thus loved by god.

The ascetic priests, then, exercised their rule by inverting the values that affirmed life and by defining all moral concepts anew. Nietzsche describes this process as the reversal of the cave metaphor. In his narrative, he goes down into the cave himself and hears how all concepts are being reshaped in whispers: "weakness" is mendaciously falsified as "merit"; anxious baseness as "humility"; submission to those one hates as "obedience" (Nietzsche, KSA5, p. 281). As a result of this revaluation of concepts, vital natures adjust themselves to values hostile to life in order to classify themselves as "beings who behave morally."

Only reflection on the concepts and their associated metaphors has the potential to disrupt their manipulative power³. This is why the act of *concept formation* determines the methodological trajectory of *Philosophizing with Children* and is characterized by Martens as “liberation from the ‘violence’ of fixed ideas, and as mental work.” (Martens, 1999, p. 106; here Martens also refers to Nietzsche’s description of “seigneurial rights,” the custom of the ruling class to name entities and thereby take possession of them.) We see here that elementary school children—contrary to popular belief—can provide original meaningful content for the ethical-political concept “social justice,” as Markus Tiedemann has demonstrated (Tiedemann, 2006). Further examples of reflection on ethical concepts can be found in the work of Gareth Matthews, who animates children in very different cultures to think about what they understand as “the highest happiness” (Matthew, 2007) or in the work of Takara Dobashi (Dobashi 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007) who gives us insight into the thoughts of Japanese children about what it means to be human, or of Eva Zoller Morf (2006) who philosophizes with Swiss children about the concept of rage, or Eva Steinherr (2006) who presents the reflections of German children on “evil,” or Barbara Brüning (1984), who thinks with six-year-olds about whether it is permissible to kill animals. I myself discuss the meaning of winning and losing in games with fourth graders (Marsal & Wilke, 2005) and the concept “friendship” with preschool children (Marsal & Dobashi, 2004). For “ethical inquiry,” Lipman even developed an entire manual: the course book *Lisa*.

This list of reflections by and with children on moral concepts and their interrelationships could be expanded at will. The value of these reflections has been discussed in various contexts. Aside from “service to life” and the therapeutic effect

³ For this reason Nietzsche, like every other philosopher, participates in the formation and analysis of concepts, for example in his efforts to clarify the concepts “nihilism,” “meaning of history,” “life,” and so on. In the framework of his experimental philosophy, he even risks another foray into metaphysics with his work on the concept “will to power;” for he needs to find a foundation for his life-practical expectations, which he links to the concepts “innocence of becoming,” “immoralism,” “revaluation of values,” and “virtue of the free spirit.” His understanding of metaphysics, of course, does not correspond to the one held by his contemporaries, which he condemns in *Twilight of the Gods* as theological and ontological metaphysics. Nietzsche characterizes his time as one which (under the ascetic ideal of world duplication) substitutes general objects for its general concepts such as existence, substance, reality, and so on, as if reality actually existed in the sense of objects. Nietzsche’s own search for metaphysical proofs, in his attempt to metaphysically underpin his philosophy, to arrive at the origin, to discover the primal power motivating every life, is demonstrated by Karl Jaspers in his analysis of Nietzsche’s attitude toward Christ, Christianity, and the church, and by Martin Heidegger, who calls Nietzsche the consummator of metaphysics, or—most recently—by Volker Gerhardt in his 1996 monograph (*On the Will to Power*), There he interprets Nietzsche’s understanding of metaphysics with the aid of Kant, who understood metaphysics as an attempt to critically assess the conditions and limits of human understanding.

emphasized by Daniela Camhy, described above, the habituation to habits of reflective competence should be mentioned, which is useful throughout life and into advanced age. Despite all limits to theoretical cognition, then, reason has a practical meaning for life, as Nietzsche also wished to demonstrate with his critique of reason. Thus, in the final analysis, Nietzsche carries on the enlightening, aporetic tradition of Socrates and Kant. In contrast to the decades-long reception history that classified Nietzsche as an "irrationalist" —for example in Georg Lukacs' work *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft* (Destruction of Reason) (Lukacs, 1962) —Nietzsche regarded himself as an enlightener, especially in the years from 1876 to 1882, when he considered himself a freethinker (Ottmann, 1985, p. 10). In *Human, All Too Human* (Nietzsche, KSA2, p. 47) he maintains that he will never allow the banner of the Enlightenment out of his hand.

3. The Value of Reason in the Life Process: The Ethical Perspective

Within the framework of whatever we agree upon as "truth," what most engages Nietzsche's interest is the practical significance that this "ascertained" truth has for the individual in his own life's context. So Nietzsche asks: "How much truth can a spirit endure, how much truth can it dare?—for me that became the real measure of value." (Nietzsche, KSA13, 1988, p. 492, *Unpublished Works*, 16/32) For Nietzsche, truth's value or lack of value is related to the choice of appropriate life goals. This choice is appropriate when it leads to exceeding the limits of the self or, as formulated by Annemarie Pieper, in "self-transcendence from man to superman." (Pieper, 2000). In his experimental philosophy, Nietzsche proposes a truth theory that draws on the relationship to the self, which I therefore call an "ethical truth theory." The late Nietzsche invests all his pathos in the idea that humans first develop their best powers *with* the truth, and in their belief in truth exceed themselves. In other words, truth allows for the individual's self-expansion; "through it he finds an authoritative ideal in which he objectifies himself. Yet as much as he goes beyond his randomness and inadequacy in it, he must not forget its origin and its purpose. Truth remains a self-imposed measure of the man; it has its value only for him." (Gerhardt, 1995, p. 111).

Nietzsche attributes to the Pre-Socratics, such as Heraclitus, for example, that they similarly proposed an "ethical-psychological-anthropological" truth theory. "To them man was the truth and the crux of the matter, all else only appearance and deceptive play." (Nietzsche, KSA1, p. 815, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*). But if man is "truth," then it is expressed in whatever he makes of himself. Thus truth's authoritative value is not in the relationship between concepts and

objects, because knowledge that orients itself toward the ideal of objectivity does not set its own goals and thus remains in the service of alien value judgments. The value of truth resides in the concepts that create a self-conferring meaning: that is, in the relationship between the concepts and the I: "Science with its truth is only a means, and not already an end in itself. Nietzsche is interested in what determines ends, thus creating values and giving meaning to man." (Gerhardt, 1995, p. 113). Since in Nietzsche's view life can only fulfill a meaning when it does not separate itself from the senses, the "meaning that guides our doing is nothing other than the conceptual framing of a goal imagined by the senses." (p. 71). With this we have definitively arrived at the second perspective from which reason should be viewed. Important here is the significance one gives to reason within one's personal inner spectrum, or within the self-perception of one's own life manifestations and their regulation. From this perspective, Nietzsche characterizes reason as discussed up to now in the following way: "An instrument of your body is also your little reason, my brother, which you call "spirit"—a little instrument and toy of your great reason." (Nietzsche, KSA4, p. 39, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*)

In Nietzsche's "book for everyone and no one," the ancient Persian sage Zarathustra speaks this enigmatic and provocative sentence in his oration against the "despisers of the body."

The "little reason" is equated with "spirit" or the "consciousness" that makes humans capable of saying "I"; the "great reason" is equated with the self that stands behind thoughts and feelings and is identified as the reason of the body. In opposition to the spirit of the times, Nietzsche reverses the value relationship between body and mind. He defines the supposedly great reason of rational awareness as "a little instrument and toy of the great reason" of the body, of the animated corpus. With this Nietzsche calls for a radical reorientation of attitudes toward the body. No longer should the body be the servant of the soul, as the idealistic tradition would have it, but instead should represent "the principle of productivity and creation." Nietzsche subordinates the spirit, or consciousness, to the body; and with this, as little reason, it steps back behind the great reason of the body." (Gerhardt, 2000, p. 123) He thus does not share the premise of Kant's critical philosophy, according to which reason in its recourse to human powers is considered a stable principle. Nietzsche doubts that the strength or even the greatness of mankind derives from reason. Instead he believes that we humans greatly overestimate our conceptual and logical competence. For him it is all too obvious that reason compensates only very poorly for physical and psychic deficiencies. "The mind is not anything on which life is really based. The greatest

part of our lives is lived without the participation of our reason." (Gerhardt, 1995, p. 109). And so Nietzsche asks,

What does man actually know about himself? [...] Does nature not conceal most things from him—even concerning his own body—in order to confine and lock him within a proud, deceptive consciousness [...]? She threw away the key. And woe to that fatal curiosity which might one day have the power to peer out and down through a crack in the chamber of consciousness and then suspect that man is sustained in the indifference of his ignorance by that which is pitiless, greedy, insatiable, and murderous—as if hanging in dreams on the back of a tiger. Given this situation, where in the world could the drive for truth have come from? (Nietzsche, KSA1, p. 877, *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense*)

According to Nietzsche's basic premise, this "drive for truth" can only have a function in service of life, and in this case that means finding the "courage of one's own truth," which is not directed against the body, but integrates it. It means finding one's own goals and daring to go beyond one's own boundaries—in other words, transcending one's own "person," which in Nietzsche's definition consists of the small but highly meaningful reason of the spirit and the big reason of the animated body. This is something that the "young soul" can already accomplish:

Man [...] need only cease to go easy on himself; let him follow his conscience, which cries out to him 'Be yourself! You are none of those things that you now do, think, and desire.' Every young soul hears this call night and day and trembles, for when it thinks of its true liberation, it has an inkling of the measure of happiness for which it is destined from eternity. As long as it is shackled by the chains of opinion and fear, nothing can help it attain this happiness. And how bleak and senseless this life can become without this liberation! [...] We are accountable to ourselves for our own existence; as a consequence, we also want to be the true helmsmen of our existence and keep it from resembling a mindless coincidence. [...] 'I want to try to attain freedom,' the young soul says to itself. [...] But how can we find ourselves again? How can humans know themselves? [...] And that is the secret of all cultivation: it does not provide artificial limbs, noses of wax, or corrective lenses. [...] Instead, education is liberation, removal of all weeds, rubble, and vermin that seek to harm the plant's delicate shoots, a radiance of light and warmth [...]. (Nietzsche, KSA1, p. 338. *Schopenhauer as Educator*)

Nietzsche describes this act of self-liberation and self-transcendence in Zarathustra's first discourse, "Of the Three Transformations." (Nietzsche, KSA4, p. 29, Thus Spoke Zarathustra). Here the spirit throws off its chains of convention "in a great disengagement" and frees itself "in an overwhelming will to itself." This spirit, now free, develops in a series of painful and lonely processes into a mature spirit of self-mastery and discipline of the heart. Along the way it develops its own laws, independently derived from general human virtues like love, bravery, and justice, and obeys them as self-imposed laws. The fundamental attitude of the free spirit is an experimental one (Kaufmann, 1988, p. 252), its privilege of mastery is "to live provisionally," "to be permitted to offer itself up to adventure." (Nietzsche, KSA2, p.

18, *Human, All Too Human*). The prerequisite for considering such an opportunity for development despite of the dangers of failure is Nietzsche's trust in the successful process of integration into nature. Nietzsche calls the positive sensation of one's own vitality, in which humans shake off the sickness of nihilism and pessimism, "great health." This alone leads to freeing productive powers with which individuals make themselves into persons and create corresponding forms of life: "But why you are there, individual, I ask you. And if none can say it for you, then try just once to justify the meaning of your existence, as it were, *a posteriori* by establishing for yourself a purpose, a final goal, a "for this reason," a high and noble "for this." (Nietzsche, KSA1, p. 319, *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life*)

To summarize, we can say that Nietzsche's predominant thought in the eighties is that the free spirit, though of necessity intellectual, can only become alive and aesthetic in alliance with its sensuality. Only in sensuality, in the "sense of the earth," does all creation have a cosmic, geological, and biological function. For Nietzsche, the great reason of the body must always accompany the little reason of the *ratio*. We can only unlock our intellect in a really productive way if we find our way back to our physical being, through which we can grasp ourselves as elements of life. One can thus see Nietzsche as an enlightener who enlightened about the Enlightenment. Or to say it another way, it was his intention to expand the radius of reason through insight into its historical, spiritual and physical conditions, thereby putting it in service to life. Jaspers states it more precisely: "And so the path to reality—thinking with the 'entire body and life'—is at the same time the path to becoming *completely* human." (Jaspers, 1936, p. 339)

Children, of course, are not able develop their own laws in "solitude" and "self-discipline"—they are even more dependent on other people and their acceptance than adults. But philosophizing with others who approach them and their thoughts attentively and with respect provides them with a protective framework, with the underlying thought of making it possible for them to develop their own values independently, not allowing them be dictated, unexamined, by whatever conventions happen to be dominant in any particular time or place. Likewise, in Zarathustra's discourse "Of the Three Transformations," the trajectory followed toward the "playing" child (a metaphor for the highest transformation of the spirit) who "in world-shaping power" "playfully moves stones back and forth, and builds up sand piles and again demolishes them" (Nietzsche, KSA1, p. 153, *The Birth of Tragedy*) metaphorically practicing an eternal "construction and destruction of the individual world," points toward the freely philosophizing child who, as described by Takara Dobashi, (see Dobashi & Marsal, 2005) is engaged in the "primal game."

In *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, Nietzsche emphasizes that this play is no arbitrary activity; here too he borrows metaphors from Heraclitus's *Philosophy of Becoming*: "Children throw away their toys; but soon they begin again in an innocent frame of mind. But as soon as children build, they connect, join, and form according to laws and an innate sense of order. Just [...] as the struggle of plurality can still bear within itself law and justice." (Nietzsche, KSA1, p. 831, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*) According to Plato, whose work the philologist Nietzsche knew well, this metaphor was related to the play with concepts, (Plato, 2009b, 6, 487c) and can thus be appropriated for the practice of philosophizing with children. Even though this means that the "little reason" is at the center of philosophizing with children, the great reason of the body is by no means completely suppressed, as recent experiments have shown. Thus Barbara Weber and Katharina Zeitler (Zeitler & Weber, 2006, pp. 89 – 94) have described integration of the physical in their report on the project initiative *Children Philosophize* at the University of Regensburg and Munich during the Federal Garden Show in 2005. They used art experienced with the senses in their "holistic philosophy spectacle" as the link between philosophy and the children's life world. In a similar way they introduced games involving the senses as a stimulus for philosophizing (Marsal & Dobashi, 2006, pp. 46 – 61).

4. The Process Dynamics of Philosophizing with Children: The Dionysian Element

In contrast to the Platonists, Peripatetics, and Epicureans, for whom philosophizing was the highest pleasure, most adults respond more as Menon did, who said during a dialogue with Socrates that he felt more and more like a "crampfish," "paralyzed in body and soul," and "knew nothing more to answer." (Plato, 2008b, 80s) But anyone who has had an opportunity to philosophize with children has felt that the "breaking apart" or "negation" of the "old," "constrained" world contains an element of pleasure for them. Takeji Hayashi saw that the faces of philosophizing children became "beautiful." (Dobashi, 2008) Ekkehard Martens (2006) comes to the conclusion that "children can philosophize and they most certainly find pleasure in it."

This pleasure, Martens asserts, derives from a sequence of four possible sources: (1) "*Schadenfreude*, or pleasure derived from unsettling others with hairsplitting, confusing questions in order to come out on top;" (2) "joy in arguing and analyzing, in their sporting enthusiasm for competitive mental games and challenges to their own powers," that is, from the "joy in intellectual competition;"

(3) “the free movement of the mind”; “the great enthusiasm shown by children trying their first steps, running around and jumping with the joy of their newly discovered freedom. In philosophizing, the children can say whatever they think, pursue ideas together, try out new ways of looking at things without prejudice, anxiety, or embarrassment, and they can spin out the threads of their thoughts. While philosophizing, the only authority they are subjected to is their own insight. No one controls them or instructs them which direction they must take. And so their pleasure in philosophizing is the experience of themselves as persons who can evolve in freedom;” (4) the recognition and living out of truth. That is to say, while philosophizing the children experience their unbounded curiosity and imagination not only

as freedom *from* [...] as freedom from mere false starts, confusing opinions, and presumptions constraining thought. Instead, one makes philosophizing primarily the experience of ‘freedom *to*’: namely freedom to use reason in orienting oneself according to whatever one determines to be true or real. [...] Not only did they want to express their ideas and opinions without being talked down to, but they also were chiefly interested in knowing whether their opinions were tenable or true. (Martens, 2006, p. 19–22)

Martens continues:

In philosophizing we experience ourselves as reasonable beings in our capacity to be astonished and observe situations and objects more precisely, understanding things *as* what they are from various viewpoints, clarifying concepts, arguing with others about tenable and less tenable reasons, and coming up with new, seemingly fantastic ways of seeing things—here again the methods or (literally, from the Greek) the road markers of philosophizing. Philosophizing is thinking further with a method—represented on the ceiling fresco as the path between earth and Heaven. (p. 22–23)

Although the aim is individual, self-aware will, the process of philosophizing with children is no Apollonian act in which the individual creates his or her own world in absolute self-reference, but rather a dialogical Socratic act. (However, the isolated will of the individual first becomes a factor, according to Nietzsche, in the Doric observation of art and the world. Apollo himself appears as “deification of the *principium individuationes*” (Nietzsche, KSA1, p. 28). Only Apollo’s counterpart Dionysus can bring freedom from self-knowledge revolving around itself and the prison of individuation born from dreams and illusions. Dionysus, the god of intoxication, allows the ego a direct connection to everything in pleasurable self-abandonment. And since philosophizing with children is characterized by the philosophical activity of giving an account within the “community of inquiry” as a reciprocal maieutic act, (Werner, 1997, p. 18) the Socratic and the Dionysian confront each other there. The Dionysian shows itself in the pleasurable sense of accomplishment the children achieve through their own thinking and their

connection to the group: "Under the spell of the Dionysian the bond between man and man locks itself into place." (Nietzsche, KSA1, p. 29, *The Birth of Tragedy*)

The range of the ethical concepts, the "courage of one's own truth," then, is not limited to the self. "The playful construction and destruction of the individual world as an emanation of primal desire" now means not only the self-reflexive alteration and development of personal objectives, but also the crossing of borders from the individual world toward the world of humanity, or in other words, toward the "collective individual" (Nietzsche, KSA2, 94, p. 91, *Human, All Too Human*) who "gives precedence" to the common good before the personal. With this, the universalization of ethical concepts becomes possible:

Thus we can find our way back to ourselves and our part in a general, universal truth shared by all, though only in small, elementary steps with no guarantees of safety. Then universal values such as human rights are not just arbitrary postulates, but are based on laboriously achieved insights into what is good for us all and for our lives together. (Martens, 2006. Pp. 22 – 23).

Through the reflection on contents and the Dionysian process induced in the community of inquiry through the method of thinking moves, the Socratic and Dionysian do not separate, but merge with each other. Thus the content element connected with giving account in the Socratic sense gives rise to Dionysian pleasure, which according to Nietzsche is tied to nature, music, and art, as well as to the forces that disrupt the rigid, hard boundaries of the ego: "The striving for the infinite, the wing-beat of longing that accompanies the highest delight in clearly perceived reality, reminds us that in both states we must recognize a Dionysian phenomenon: again and again it reveals to us the playful construction and destruction of the individual world as the overflow of a primordial delight." (Nietzsche, KSA1, p. 153, *The Birth of Tragedy*)

Through the Dionysian we experience ourselves not just as distinct beings, but also as bound up in something like a deep "intoxication" with our fellow humans and the natural world: „Alienated, hostile, or subjugated nature, too, celebrates her reconciliation with her lost son, man." (p. 29). "Now the slave is a free man, now all the stiff, hostile barriers break apart, those things which necessity and arbitrary power or "impudent fashion" have established between men. Now, with the gospel of world harmony, every man not only feels himself united with his neighbor, reconciled and fused together [...]. Singing and dancing, man expresses himself as a member of a higher unity." (p. 29)

5. Conclusion

The objectives and methods of philosophizing with children support the idea that the reduction of our age so deplored by Nietzsche, which arose from destruction of the inner unity of “instinct and consciousness” that had still been connected in ancient tragedy – or in modern terms, “intuition and consciousness” – can again be suspended by, among other things, philosophizing with children. Thus for Lipman the goal is “wisdom”: critical and creative-intuitive thinking tied to primary experiences and achieved in “self-determined dialogue” within the framework of a “community of inquiry.” (Lipman, 1984, p. 7) In this way the individual can transcend the self in two directions: first in further development with regard to the ego and the self, and second in further development with regard to the “you” and the “we.” In philosophizing with children, Nietzsche’s metaphors, with his antithetical Socratic-Dionysian pair, provide a language game for representing the interweaving of ethical perspectives on the connections between self, community, and world, grasped and modulated by concepts. The approach to concepts is marked by a given epistemological approach; for Nietzsche it is marked by the striving to put forward a philosophical theory dedicated to personal expansion and development. And so his definitive question is: “How much truth does a spirit dare?” From the perspective of this question we can also reconstruct philosophizing with children, through which children and future adults can develop into “sovereign” persons.

Translated by Hope Hague

Abbreviations

KSA = Friedrich Nietzsche (1980). *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*. Edited by Giorgio Colli & Mazzino Montinari. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980.

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"How Much Truth Can a Spirit Dare?" Nietzsche's "Ethical" Truth Theory as an Epistemic Background for Philosophizing with Children

Abstract. Philosophizing, according to E. Martens, can be seen as an elemental cultural technology, like arithmetic or writing, which both can and should be acquired in childhood. Martens is proposing here an understanding of philosophy that attributes value not only to the content canon, but also to the process itself, as Wittgenstein, for one, also did when he stated in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, "Philosophy is not a doctrine, but an activity." For Socrates, this activity consisted in "giving an account of ourselves, our knowledge, our way of life." In Nietzsche's view, the precondition for this kind of accounting is the personal capacity for self-distancing, which allows us to grasp our quite individual primal experiences of emotion, perception, sudden illuminations of insight, and so on, as general concepts and logical structures.

Keywords. Philosophizing, Nietzsche, truth, value, pathos, morality, reason, dialogue, inquiry.

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Citations. Reference this paper as: Marsal, E. (2011). "How Much Truth Can a Spirit Dare?" Nietzsche's "Ethical" Truth Theory as an Epistemic Background for Philosophizing with Children. *Ethics in Progress Quarterly*, Volume 2, Issue 2, pp. 23–45, available online at ethicsinprogress.org.