

What is Philosophy for Children, How do we have to understand her critical voice? From an educational experiment to experimental education

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Abstract

In this paper the questions 'What is Philosophy for Children' and 'How do we understand her critical voice today', are at stake. The starting point is the observation that Philosophy for Children nowadays receives a growing attention. At first sight this leads to the impression that the issue of philosophy increasingly gained a solid ground in the hearts and minds of educational researchers and practitioners. However, in this paper we argue that considerable remarks can be made towards the critical voice of Philosophy for Children. Philosophy for Children nowadays increasingly appears as an interesting programme to improve children's capacity to think. Facing the current importance for self-reflection and self-actualisation, doubts arise whether programmes as P4C are still useful to formulate critique. The aim of this paper is furthermore not discussing what P4C has to be, but how it looks like (and could look like) in an age in which critical thinking seems to become the central point of education.

Introduction

What is Philosophy for Children? How do we have to understand her critical voice? Philosophy for Children (P4C) arises in the 1970s as an educational experiment and critique against traditional forms of education. It criticises education for its institutional context and economic force that does not stimulate and even obstructs thinking for oneself. The educational experiment P4C appears as such as an alternative that approaches the child as a critical and active thinker. Moreover methods and strategies are developed as necessary conditions for education that open opportunities to think and act for oneself. Meanwhile, Lipman's critical educational experiment receives a growing attention. After all, thinking and acting according to the legitimacy of one's own desires and thoughts today no longer seems to be experienced as a critique against traditional forms of education but something that has become an indispensable opportunity not only for education but for every organisation or institution within society. Illustrations of this evolution are not only the growing interest to implement P4C in the school curriculum (cf. Hand & Winstanley, 2008) but also the many workshops that have been organised to train educational practitioners, managers and trainers in practical philosophy. At first sight this may lead to the impression that the issues of self-reflection and self-responsibility increasingly have gained a solid ground in the hearts and minds of educational researchers and practitioners. However, considerable remarks can be made towards the critical voice of P4C in an age where critical thinking is regarded as commonplace and important to invest in. Facing the current importance for self-reflection and self-actualisation, we doubt whether programmes such as P4C are still useful to problematize society. Or differently, what we want to do in this paper is asking the question what it means when an institutional framework like the school claims to question its own framework. And what exactly is the consequence of such a claim for thinking education, philosophy, critique and the child. To achieve the aim of this paper, exploring what P4C is about, we have to discuss how it looks like (and could look like) in an age in which critical thinking seems to become the central point of education.

As such, in this paper we will not formulate an argument in favour of or against P4C. Neither is it the aim to investigate her employability and effort. Rather than problematizing different perspectives and arguments

against the horizon of a particular idea of P4C, we will explore the kind of subject(ivity) (and as such the kind of critique) that is generated through these perspectives and arguments. In line with Lyotard (1999) we suppose that critique nowadays no longer functions as an antithesis of the existing social order and power but that it has become a part of that order and power. To put it differently, we suppose that Lipman's critical experiment today can be described as an effect and an instrument of an advanced form of power (cf. Lyotard, 1999; Masschelein, 2004)¹. This means that power operates precisely through the intensification of critique; that the subject is addressed to think about himself, the other and the world in order to be(come) free. This will lead us back to the question: what could P4C also be about at a time in which critique becomes an essential and even necessary part of life? In short, we want to argue that the current understanding of P4C implies a particular way of thinking and acting (and a particular critique) that has become the horizon of what we are addressed to think and do. At this level we want to understand how the idea to philosophize with children is developed from an educational experiment towards experimental capital. In order to describe this development and the kind of individuality that is produced by it, the first section will be a genealogical excursion that explains how the concept of P4C, being disconnected from traditional forms of thinking about education and teaching, has been used to refer to a kind of philosophical potential for which the child itself is responsible and that can and should become an object of educational investment. The second section indicates how today this experimental idea is developed within the discourse on P4C onto a particular subject or mode of self-understanding that draws upon a kind of apparatus of self-reflection and self-mobilisation. In the conclusion we will focus on the mode of self-understanding within this self-reflective apparatus and raise the question whether it is possible to rethink P4C. Not in terms of an investment in experimental ideas but in terms of testing and modifying, experimenting not with one's ideas but with one's life, at the risk of one's own subjectivity.

Philosophy for Children and the development of an educational experiment

Pioneered by Matthew Lipman, P4C arises in the 1970s as an educational experiment and critique against traditional forms of education. Lipman developed a philosophical-educational programme as a response to the concern that children in traditional forms of education do not think as well as they are capable of and that is necessary for a truly democratic and well-functioning society. He states that only by strengthening the thought that the child's thinking should be the chief business of the schools and not just an incidental outcome, the schooling of autonomous citizens in a democracy can be realized (Lipman & Sharp, 1978). Accordingly, P4C has been proposed as a step in this direction. Insofar that it presents itself as an alternative for an educational system that is not driven by meaningful experiences and discovery but by economic and bureaucratic considerations (Lipman, 2003, p. 10). The aim of P4C is therefore to help students to become more reflective thinkers and to gain control or mastery over the organization of their thinking and learning. Only philosophy in its active form can reach the instruments that enable the child to think for itself and make its own decisions (Lipman, 1988). By this Lipman formulates the question of philosophy in a totally different manner. In contrast to Plato's theory of ideas that claims that children's exposition to philosophy, for the child as well as for philosophy itself can have a subversive and corruptive effect, Lipman proposes Philosophy for Children as a potential productive investment in society. 'If children are not given the opportunity to weigh and discuss both ends and means, and their interrelationship, they are likely to become cynical about everything except their own well-being, and adults will not be slow to condemn them as 'mindless little relativists'' (Lipman, 1988, p. 14). In this respect, Lipman argues that the traditional hesitation to expose children to philosophy does not serve the interest of society, but the development of an ideal (The Ideal State) to which the development of the child must be submitted (Lipman, 1988, p. 15). Consequently, philosophy for Lipman is not an investment in the Ideal State. It is a search for possibilities to think for oneself, not submitted to imperatives of a social, political, cultural or religious nature. 'Nowhere', so Lipman

argues, 'does Socrates ever draw the line when it comes to doing philosophy with people of different ages, for doing philosophy is not a matter of age, but of ability to reflect scrupulously and courageously on what one finds important' (Lipman, 1988, p. 15).

Accordingly, in contrast to Leonard Nelson who receives in the early 1930s a lot of attention with his Socratic method, Lipman's P4C program is not based on universally generalizable principles to be known a priori. For his interpretation of philosophy Lipman does not turn to Kant, but to pragmatism (Engelhart, 1998). Lipman argues that reasonableness is not pure rationality. 'It is rationality tempered by judgment' (Lipman, 2003, p. 10). Hence, reasonableness, here, does not refer to a use of reason in which reason has no other end but itself, it merely refers to a use of reason in which it enables a person to explore problematic situations in everyday life in order to reach an equitable solution. Lipman writes that something is reasonable when it offers 'at least a glimpse of the direction in which we are to go' (ibid. p. 6). Or differently, when it has proven to be useful to persuade, predominantly for logical reasons and for the quality of living together. Especially in the philosophical writings of Dewey we find the roots of Lipman's vision. Lipman takes over from Dewey the idea that thinking for oneself can only be improved when reflecting about the consequences the individual ascertains by his actions. As such, for Lipman reason refers to the possibility to acquire knowledge about possible actions and reactions. This does not imply that success is guaranteed. Because we do not have at our disposal something that offers us more certainty than reflective action, we have to focus to increase the reflective quality of our actions and knowledge. It is about 'suggesting possible lines of consequence or divergence' and 'moving the discussion to a higher level of generality' (Lipman & Sharp, 1978, p.105). Whereas Dewey connects this effort to previous experiences and additional hypotheses and observations, Lipman makes use of (in)formal logic (Daniel, 1992). For Lipman it is not merely about mapping knowledge of diverse possibilities that can take place, but the search for knowledge of possible incorrect presuppositions in the activity of thinking about possible solutions to a problem. 'The absence of logical skills in the usual thinking skill approach ensures that little will be done to overcome students incoherence in the formulation of explanations and arguments, in the ferreting out of underlying assumptions and implications, or in the unification of meanings' (Lipman, 1988, p. 41). Lipman writes that 'to know the causes of ideas – the conditions under which they are thought – is to liberate ourselves from intellectual rigidity and to bestow upon ourselves that power of choosing among and acting upon alternatives that is the source of intellectual freedom' (Lipman, 2003, p. 35). Critical thinking, then, means being able to make a distinction between better and weaker ways of reasoning in addition to which better ways are defined under the category of analytical thinking. In other words, according to this approach a critical thinker is someone who has at his disposal analytical thinking skills to acquire knowledge about underlying presuppositions: it is someone who in his thoughts and actions is guided by knowledge and logical principles as a source to make analyses and speculations. Consequently, for Lipman the use of analytical thinking enables one to predict what will occur and to understand the larger picture that will permit more objective judgments to account for what does occur. It means that 'each belief must be subjected to the tests of logic and experience. It does not matter whose opinions they are, or whose ideas they are – they must submit to the requirement that they be internally consistent, and their proponents must divulge the evidence that supports them' (Lipman, e.a. , 1980, p. 133).

An autonomous critical thinker in this interpretation is thus someone who has at his/her disposal analytical thinking skills, someone who knows how to discover prejudices and selfish reasons through acquired knowledge about himself, the other and the world. Or differently, it is someone who has to acquire analytical thinking skills in order to be critical and to think in an autonomous way. The achievement of analytical thinking skills in other words is a necessary condition in order to be able to think and to become self-conscious. One has to be critical, but therefore one has to behave oneself in a particular way. Only, a manner of thinking about philosophy that transcends the disciplines and thus implies analytical thinking skills can be called reasonable or self-conscious. However, the question arises whether Lipman's interpretation of transcendence can actually be understood as transcendence. Since transcendence in

Lipman's early interpretation is likewise defined by the submission of oneself to the dominance of analytical thinking, it could easily be criticized for its idealism and that it is not very different from what has been meant traditionally under the scope of philosophy. The reformulation of this question in educational terms brought Lipman to the role of the teacher and the community of inquiry. As facilitators teachers should be able to achieve the skills to transform the classroom into a community of inquiry. What is necessary then according to Lipman, are professional teachers who are capable of using philosophy as a 'learning method'. This is a method in which contexts are created, where critical thinking is interpreted as a natural process capable of being developed, and not as something children have to appropriate (Lipman, 1980, p. 15). Hence, what constitutes P4C is a process that is experienced both as a task one has to go through in order to develop critical thinking and to participate collectively. The practice of P4C, as such, cannot be simply considered as a natural process. Still it cannot be seen as a task that is obliged since it is a practice that does not require obedience, but development. The use of P4C in other words is related to the appeal not to obey to dogmatism. Not to obey to dogmatism is the condition for being critical, and this condition implies the development of particular thinking skills and knowledge. Critical thinking in this educational-philosophical approach is thus linked to particular conditions necessary to experience oneself as someone who thinks for oneself and feels free, and these conditions refer to particular knowledge and skills.

An educational experiment becomes 'experimental' capital

In the meantime Lipman's experiment has expanded and grown into a mixture of approaches with different methods, techniques and instructions. This, what often is called a second generation of P4C, has taken over a lot of Lipman's ideas, but also new elements have entered the scene (Reed & Johnson, 1999). These new elements does not seem to be a critique against Lipman's P4C, but rather as a further development and indication of the way in which should be thought about critique. Accordingly, for this exploration references will be made to different authors and arguments. These references, however will not be made to analyze the arguments of these particular authors, but to map further the kind of rationality (the subject) that is brought into being through the discourse on P4C.

With the new generation particularly Lipman's strong emphasis on analytical thinking as a guarantee for autonomy is put under pressure. New ideas shape form: more and more notions as plurality and intersubjectivity are being emphasized instead of logic to think about autonomy. From the eighties onwards, P4C as described by Lipman is being criticized, especially from a feminists point of view. 'Equality is not the answer either since it is grounded on an essentialism that implies necessarily assimilation to a pre-existing, for the most part, male norm. Any 'essential' quality shared by all is so abstract that it excludes and/or dismisses differences among people. Moreover, the very appearance of universality depends on its congruence with the dominant sites of power [...]. Postmodernists, on the other hand, intent on disrupting and depowering the grand narratives of traditional male philosophers and even of some contemporary feminist theorists' (Sheerin, 1998, p. 62). However, not only Lipman's emphasis on logic and analytic thinking is being criticized, also the idea that children are not so far away from adult rationality. Walter Kohan for example opposes to the idea to give children access to the world of adults. 'This approach tends to legitimate the actual dominant form of rationality, and to close off space for any eventual alternative world. [...]. What might children expect from this 'generous' inclusion in adult's rationality? A silencing of their voices as children?' (Kohan, 1999, p. 5). It is argued that it is not so much about giving proof that children can think like adults, but that they think and that in the dominant theories of knowledge this thinking does not get the attention it deserves. 'The first step should be to recognize that [...] 'the hegemonic theory of knowledge of the day' or the 'rationalistic ideal of reason' systematically excludes children's thought and experience. Only after the deconstruction of that dominant theory of knowledge, it will be possible to reintegrate those elements of the child's episteme that have been silenced by adult rationality' (Ibid, p. 4). Accordingly, within the discourse on P4C it is argued that age nor 'scholastic' development may determine

someone's position as critical thinker. Rather than thinking of the child in terms of preconceived and stable developmental structures, the child is conceived as a subject who has an individual opinion which s/he can (and has to) discover on the basis of a philosophical inquiry. Remarkable is that this inquiry nowadays no longer in the first place is focused on the discovery of a general judgment. Much more it is envisaged as a method that helps the child finding out what his/her real opinions, desires and capacities are. In other words, through the community of inquiry the child is not asked to respond to socially constituted desire but to individual drives, drives that are influenced by the permanently changing society. Hence, far more than an endless search for reasonable judgement, what is suggested in the actual discourses on P4C is that one has to think about the question how to tackle the barriers to come to self-consciousness. As such, P4C is conceived of as 'a very empowering process because it brings the youngster to a point where choice is possible instead of habitual behaviour' (Ibid.). In the same line Rondhuis and van der Leeuw (2000) write that '[P]hilosophy is more than analysing or speculating, it has to do with the conduct of life itself, and so presupposes a readiness to reflect on and clarify experience' (2000, p. 33). Accordingly it is argued that analytic thinking needs to be complemented with creative thinking and caring thinking (Lipman, 2003). For the child who is philosophizing, critical thinking then is no longer about getting access to 'scholastic' skills such as logical thinking but about becoming conscious of one's life process, emotions and abilities and relating oneself in an active, conductive manner towards this process. The result of this manner of thinking is that P4C increasingly appears as an investment in individual (and collective) human life: a programme that strengthens the capacity to govern one's life in a permanently changing (knowledge-based) society (Gleghorn, 2003).

Hence, in this form of subjectivity, no longer a training in logical thinking or the acquisition of general knowledge is at stake, but a development of particular knowledge, skills and an attitude that contribute to one's personal development (UNESCO, 2006, p. 200). In this sense one no longer speaks about Philosophy for Children in terms of a method, either. Increasingly the practice of P4C is envisaged in terms of creating challenging environments. These environments then do not refer to a material or physical space. They refer to symbolic spaces, contexts or zones where different meanings are circulating, where individual thinking is put under critique, where one meets other perspectives and where one time and again can give renewed meaning to one's life in a safe place (UNESCO, 2006). In other words, P4C provides particular strategies, procedures and instruments which enable the individual to direct oneself to prior perspectives, preferences, desires and abilities. Its usefulness consists increasingly in its ability to examine the limits of one's individual perspectives, assumptions, capacities and thoughts in order to get access to limits of one's particular needs and problems and to become a more effective 'autonomous chooser' (see Marshall, 1995; Simons and Masschelein, 2008). Being critical then, in this constellation, means the exchange of personal and well-examined perspectives and worldviews and the diagnosis of shortcomings that prevent the realization of this aim. And the more one produces critique that stimulates the continuous question for growth, which means the achievement of more complex insights about problems and shortcomings that prevent the realization of personal autonomy, the more one is able to transform oneself into a subject that is occupied by the development and government of one's true self. Christine Gehrett writes in this context 'to live in a community is to increase our possibilities of accomplishing more' (Gehrett, 1999, p. 23). As a result, the idea to understand the community of inquiry in terms of an environment correlates with the need to get permanently access to different opinions and perspectives in order to maximize the mind. Autonomy, critical thinking, self-reflection and liberation then are concepts that are no longer brought to light in order to react against the existing, social order and power, but have become a part of an order that experiences critical thinking as an absolute necessity to survive (cfr. Masschelein, 2004; Lyotard, Lyotard, 1999).

As such, no longer bio-power – that is the form of power, aimed not only at controlling the population but producing and reproducing all forms of social life - is an adequate term to indicate the form of power that is constituted through the discourse on P4C, but psycho-power (Stiegler, 2010). Since an environment offers guidelines how to invest in life rather than giving authoritative prescriptions how to live one's life, it

becomes necessary that one keeps reflecting upon individual and collective desires and capacities. This means that within P4C one continuously experiences the need to adjust and readjust individual perspectives, thoughts or self-image, facilitated by the expertise of the professional philosopher. No disciplines taught at school orientate the individual towards infinite knowledge to come, not merely norms, but psycho-technologies stripped of their formidable theoretical framework. In other words what the teacher who philosophizes with children provides is no theoretical knowledge, but dialogical skills, strategies and procedures that are based on philosophical knowledge that leads the individual step by step towards the production of critical potential and information to improve the quality of personal life (Simons, 2006). It is about knowledge of philosophical concepts, interpretations, analyses, questions and styles necessary to install challenging environments in order to produce the philosophical thinker: i.e. someone who has liberated him/herself from unproductive ways of thinking (Fastvold, 2006).

Accordingly, not the question what is problematic about universal standardized categories and philosophical theories form the focal point of the actual discourse on Philosophy for Children, but 'how' to give form to one's personal development in a changing environment. Personality is no longer considered as given, characterized with inescapable temporalities and natural heaviness. On the contrary, it becomes something that can be modified at will, sculpted and reshaped by qualified philosophical thinkers. It becomes a matter of choice and a personal assembly of a particular array of elements on offer in a shopping mall of 'real' philosophical spirituality (cf. Rose, 1999). Analogously, thinking for oneself ceases to be the external expression of an inner truth and becomes a matter of acquired competences, knowledge and skills of self-government and self-awareness (cf. Rose, 1999, p. 271-272).

Hence, although critical thinking continues to exist, the process is all encompassing. In sum, before individuals can act and think for themselves and before they can act critically on the basis of their own thoughts, they, as Masschelein writes 'must first become the kind of person interested in and capable of relating to themselves as their responsible agents of their own conduct' (Masschelein, 2004, p. 361).

P4C, ethos and experimental education

In what follows I want to explore another idea of philosophy for children². An idea that does not want to overcome power-relations but that, in line with the kind of research I have tried to do from the beginning of this paper, works upon power-relations. This means that what I want to do in this last part of the text, is articulating an idea of philosophy with children in which philosophy will not be conceived of as the practice of a legislating subject passing judgment on a deficient reality, but as the practice of an ethical subject analyzing the presuppositions on which apparently transparent practices (read subjectivities) rest. Here the adversary of philosophy with children is not the formation of a subject, but its disclosure. This does not mean the same as 'deconstruction', if this word supposes an edifice composed of demonstration and analysis. Perhaps one could speak rather of undoing the closure of the subject.

In the previous parts, I have try to show that what binds us to actual discourses on P4C are no doctrinal elements, but a permanent reactivation of a critical attitude that is called into being by and through programmes such as P4C (as a body of knowledge and strategies leading the individual to critical thinking). While P4C explicitly criticizes traditional education for her focus on generalizable principles and knowledge to be known in order to become an autonomous subject, it does not free the subject from this idea. Using Foucault's reformulation of Kant's conception of 'Aufklärung', it can be argued that while Lipman's philosophical programme indeed does no longer depend on a fundamental universalism about mankind, its, what Foucault (1984, p. 6) has called, 'intellectual blackmail' remains. After all, it is from the pursuit of humanism that the idea of thinking for oneself derives its dynamics. Notwithstanding its fundament no longer lays in a universal idea of human being, it seems that it remains bound to a particular rationality (or subjectivity) that can be read as the limits within which thinking, acting and hoping have to stay in order to reach true knowledge, right action and worthwhile desire.

Inspired by Foucault, in what follows I will try to articulate another idea of what philosophy for children could be about. Consisting in a critique that does not ask for skills or knowledge, but that implies a series of philosophical inquiries that have to be practiced as punctual as possible. These inquiries, then, may either not be viewed from the perspective of a search for formal structures with universal value, but rather as a genealogical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying (Foucault, 1984, p.6). At that point, these kind of inquiries are characterized by a limit-attitude or a work done at the limits of that what makes up our reality and that constitutes ourselves and our way of doing, thinking and saying in that reality. What is at stake in these kind of inquiries is explicitly a *limit-attitude* or an *ethos* constituting the search for the limits of what can be thought, felt and said in a particular time and space. Critique then means an analysis and reflection upon these limits: on these features that what constitutes ourselves as critical beings for instance. Now it could be said that this is also what is at stake in P4C. However, whereas for Lipman critique is about legitimating what the limits of knowledge are, a philosophical inquiry that is characterized by a limit-attitude starts from the question to what extent is that what is given to us as universal, necessary and obligatory, singular or the product of an arbitrary act? This comes down to a transformation of critique conducted in the form of a necessary limitation into a practical critique that takes the form of a limit-experience (Ibid., p. 6). An obvious implication of this transformation is that the practise of critique no longer functions as a search for (in)formal structures that work dominating or oppressive but for structures or power relations that have a conductive force (Ibid.). This means that it is about a detailed analysis of the ways of thinking, acting, wanting and feeling that have made up our present, and that have constituted oneself in that present as a subject. As a result, this kind of critical analysis always is an analysis of what we want ourselves. After all, critique is not unrelated to what we want but only active throughout our will (Simons & Masschelein, 2008b, p. 15).

Indeed, this is not an attempt to write about ourselves in terms of identity. Instead, it is a concern to develop an analysis that makes visible ‘the vectors that shape our relation to ourselves moving from the question ‘what kind of selves have we become?’ to ‘how do we relate to ourselves as selves of a certain kind’ (Rabinow & Rose, 2003). In that sense, critique here is that practice in which one is concerned with ‘truth through which we constitute ourselves as subjects acting on others’, and with ‘ethics through which we constitute ourselves as moral agents’ (Hacking, 2002, p. 2). Hence, in thinking of constituting ourselves as moral agents, as Hacking writes, we think of constituting ourselves as so and so. Yet we are concerned, in the end, with possible ways to be a person (Ibid.). And this concern has an ethical component as well. Ethical, here, however, does not refer to the constitution of moral agents as something that is generalizable for all rational beings and that forms the universal structure of all thinking and of all action. On the contrary, we constitute ourselves at a place and time, using materials that have a distinctive and historically formed organisation. ‘The ethical component to be unravelled then is how we, as people in civilisations with histories, have become moral agents, through constituting ourselves as moral agents in specific, local historical ways’ (Ibid, p.2). Critical thought, as such, adopts a particular relation to ethics, in that sense that it allows one to step back from a particular way of acting and thinking: to present it to oneself as an object of thought in terms of its meaning, its conditions and its goals. Critical thinking is the movement by which one detaches oneself from ones mode of thinking and acting, establishing it as an object, and reflecting on it as a problem. But this kind of thinking is not autonomous in any of the strong senses given in western philosophy. Critical thinking, as it is understood here, is neither transparent, nor a passive waiting or an intentional act of consciousness. Critical thinking is not necessarily coherent, it has no univocal or foundational meaning that is amenable to a completely reasonable clarification. Critical thinking, is not an external evaluation of a situation. Critical thinking, here, is the transformation of what is given as universal, necessary and obligatory into a question that needs a response. This kind of thinking then can be considered as ethical, in this sense that it separates us out from the contingency that has made us who we are, do or think. This separation does not lead us to a search for the truth that in the end becomes a science (knowledge). It is a separation that gives ‘new impetus, as far and wide as possible, to the undefined work of

freedom' (Foucault, 1984, p.6). This means that the thinker is neither entirely outside of the situation in question nor entirely enmeshed within it. As a matter of fact, it means that the thinker is present in the present, exposed to what is happening here and now: no longer in the position to stay who one is and confronted with the question how to live the present.

To put it briefly, from the idea of a limit attitude the critical thinker goes looking for different attitudes towards the present. Accordingly this limit attitude always is an experimental attitude (Simons & Masschelein, 2008b). It is the thinker that experiments with the self. More precisely: he/she experiments with the way he/she lives in the present (Ibid.). Or differently, from the idea of a limit-attitude the personal thoughts, feelings and actions of the critical thinker are also at stake by which a space opens to look differently to the self, others and the world and to stay no longer who one is or is supposed to be. Philosophy then is an issue of attitude, an attitude that has something to do with an openness for the child. However, the child here is not the same as the not yet reasonable or autonomous subject. It refers rather to the completely other than the self, so that it may arrive as the potentiality to question and decompose the process of subjectivation.

Concluding thoughts

Returning to the main question of this paper, what is Philosophy for Children or what could her critical voice be about today, we will formulate the suggestion that it is the potentiality to 'de-subjectify'. And that this potentiality as a matter of fact encloses the essence of education. Of course, in essence philosophy is not education. As a matter of fact, we want to suppose that philosophy is that what makes education possible. The ambition of education is to bring order, while philosophy disorders. P4C tries to combine both terms, which, at first sight, seems to be at an impossibility. Since the child is traditionally envisaged as a not yet adult, education is envisaged as a method that has to bring the child to a particular destiny and determination. Now, within the discourse on P4C it is argued that this way of thinking about childhood and education is misleading and prevents the child from being critical. What we have argued in this paper is that this does not have to be a reason to envisage the child as an autonomous chooser, which is inherent to the actual experience of P4C. Since the figure of the autonomous chooser is related to a particular subject(ivity) or experience of the child that can be described and defined in terms of yet fixated capacities or needs to be realized or articulated, we have argued that this is a way of thinking that embeds the child, rather than lifting it out its bed. Hence, we suppose a radical refusal of thinking the child in terms of developmental characteristics and argue for a way of thinking about philosophy for children that stands for the significance of a de-subjectifying or limit-experience. A way of thinking that experiences childhood (the child) as a question, irreducible, never relative towards something else in terms of causal relation or judgment. This way of thinking about philosophy for children then has a double task: exploring a kind of thinking that starts from the irreducible, and asks oneself the question how to live with it. Therefore, thinking about one's life can no longer form the focal point of education. Of vital importance is that education takes us away from the structures that constitute our thoughts, actions and feelings. What philosophy for children enlightens then is our possibility to think. It provokes the experience that we are (still) not thinking, even if thinking forms the focal point of education. This consciousness however is not science, it is an opening. It is experiencing a desire to think, confronted with the unthinkable and the unbearable, ... with something all too human to think. This desire refers to the indescribable need to go and to see without knowing what there is to see. Hence, philosophy for children in this self-understanding does not seek to discover knowledge about the self, the other or the world. It directs oneself to live *with* the unpredictability of the self, the other and the world. It directs oneself to the rhythm of life. Let's say to what comes, i.e. the child.

Notes

² Here philosophy for children is not written with capitals because it no longer refers to a particular movement or content, but to the possibility to rethink it.

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