

## CREATIVITY OR PASSION? WHAT IS AT STAKE IN PHILOSOPHY WITH CHILDREN?

*¿Creatividad o pasión? Qué está en juego en la filosofía  
para niños*

*Créativité ou passion? Qu'est qui est en jeu dans la philosophie  
pour des enfants?*

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Fecha de recepción: marzo de 2010

Fecha de aceptación definitiva: julio de 2010

Biblid [(1130-3743) 22, 2-2010, 131-149]

### RESUMEN

Desde principios de los años noventa podemos percibir un interés creciente en la filosofía para niños. Los niños son considerados individuos con competencias filosóficas capaces de construir el significado de la vida por sí mismos. En este artículo queremos problematizar el interés actual en la filosofía para niños a partir de un análisis de la subjetividad particular que ésta promueve. El objetivo es analizar el tipo de sujeto que quiere filosofar (con niños), la racionalidad de la relación con uno mismo que caracteriza este sujeto y el modo en que la filosofía aparece en este contexto. Nuestra cuestión es: ¿Qué tipo de sujeto emerge en y a través de este discurso sobre filosofía

con niños? Argumentaremos que este discurso moviliza lo que Bröckling ha descrito como la figura del sujeto emprendedor. Para concluir esbozaremos otra figura del sujeto filosófico, una figura que rechaza la actitud del sujeto emprendedor.

*Palabras clave:* filosofía con niños, creatividad imperante, sujeto emprendedor, infancia, pasión.

#### SUMMARY

Since the beginning of the 1990s we can notice a growing interest for philosophy with children. Children are considered as individuals with philosophical competences to construct the meaning of life themselves. In this paper we want to problematize this current interest in philosophy with children through an analysis of the particular subjectivity or figure that it mobilizes. The aim is to analyse the kind of figure that wants to philosophise (with children), the rationality of the relation to the self that characterizes such a figure and the way philosophy appears in this context. Our question is: what kind of figure emerges in and through this discourse on philosophy with children? We will argue that this discourse mobilizes what Bröckling has described as the figure of the entrepreneurial self. We conclude sketching another figure of the philosophical self, a figure who refuses the attitude of the entrepreneurial self.

*Key words:* philosophy with children, creative imperative, entrepreneurial self, childhood, passion.

#### SOMMAIRE

Dès le début des années '90 nous pouvons noter un intérêt croissant pour la philosophie pour les enfants. Les enfants y sont considérés comme des individus avec une compétence philosophique de donner une signification à la vie eux-mêmes. Dans cet article nous voulons problématiser cet intérêt courant en essayant d'esquisser la subjectivité particulière ou «la figure» qu'elle mobilise. Par figure nous entendons un individu qui est caractérisé par une certaine façon de se rapporter au monde et à soi (un «éthos»). On offre alors une analyse de la «figure» qui veut philosopher (avec des enfants), de la rationalité qui caractérise une telle figure et de la façon dont la philosophie apparaît dans ce contexte. Notre question est: quel genre de «figure» émerge à travers le discours sur la philosophie pour des enfants? Nous montrerons que ce discours mobilise la figure que Bröckling a décrit comme figure de l'individu entreprenant. En conclusion nous esquissons une autre figure de l'individu philosophique, une figure qui refuse l'attitude ou l'éthos de l'individu entreprenant.

*Mots clés:* philosophie pour des enfants, impératif créative, l'individu entreprenant, enfance, passion.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Whereas philosophy for a long time has been recognized as a «superfluous» activity or at least as an activity limited to certain individuals or particular groups, since a couple of decades philosophy is increasingly understood as an activity essential for everybody, and especially also for children. There is not only an emerging interest in philosophical practices as philosophical workshops, philosophy cafés («cafés philosophiques»), philosophical counselling and general philosophy books, there is also a new interest in philosophy in education. In the UNESCO-publication «Philosophy a school for freedom» (UNESCO, 2007) we read for instance about «a paradigm shift» and «a need to philosophize». One speaks about the reopening of the debate and the need to put philosophy at the «heart of the international agenda». Philosophy is described as «a matter of major importance if we wish to increase the value of our knowledge and share it, to invest in quality education to ensure equal opportunity for everyone» (UNESCO, 2007, ix).

However, this increasing interest in philosophy is neither an interest in a specific discipline nor an interest in the philosophical canon or the transmission of philosophical knowledge. Instead, reference to philosophy is made because of its focus on the transformation of the classroom and the school into a community of inquiry and the introduction of a general attitude to think *with* children (and adolescents) in stead of *for* children.

More in general, one could state that, although there are still discussions regarding the way philosophy has to be implemented in the school curriculum (*cf.* Hand and Winstanley, 2008), thinking with children and adolescents in a philosophical way becomes something which is increasingly experienced as of crucial importance and necessary in education. In view of this a whole arsenal of educational programmes appears that claim to stimulate philosophical thinking. These programmes are a kind of proposals for training sessions with standard exercises that are as general as possible and thus for everyone accessible.

Although it would be interesting to investigate whether (and in what way) these programmes are an efficient and effective contribution to the need to philosophize with children and adolescents (*cf.* Suissa, 2008)<sup>1</sup>, we want to take a different pathway. Our starting point is not the question: what is philosophy with children (its definition or description) and how can it be implemented in the curriculum?

1. In the article «Philosophy in the Secondary School - A Deweyan Perspective» (2008), SUISSA criticises Philosophy for Children for its emphasis on self-actualisation and argues for a more Deweyan approach in relation to the implementation of philosophy in the curriculum. Much more than philosophy for children, according to Suissa, the latter approach should be focused on worldly problems in stead of individual problems or problems on self-actualisation. The emphasize on worldly problems understood in this article however, does not appear as aim in itself, but as a possible solution to shortcomings within processes on self-actualisation. Hence, Suissa's argument that Philosophy with children disregarded a repressed dimension of humanity could be seen as a part of the discourse on self-actualisation as well.

In what follows we rather intend to explore the figure (the child) that experiences philosophizing with others (and, thus, implementing philosophical stakes, principles and approaches in education) as something which is meaningful, important and even, to certain extent, evident and necessary. This means that we don't focus on the limits of the programmes of philosophy with children (balancing the pro's and cons), but on the limits of what is experienced within these programmes as necessary and fundamental. Rather than trying to assess the discrepancies between the intentions and realisations or the discourse and the practices, and rather than assessing the arguments pro and contra, we will explore how a particular subjectivity (a figure) emerges in and through the discourse on philosophy with children. So our question is: who is it, what kind of person (child) is it that wants to philosophize and how does it conceive of philosophy?

However, we do not opt for a psychological approach in order to present a psychological profile. Neither do we try to offer a typology from a sociological or cultural point of view. Our intention is an explorative analysis of the *figure* at the level of ethics. Relying upon the work of Michel Foucault, ethics does not refer to a collection of rules and values, but to the way people relate to themselves (and to others and the world) (*cf.* Foucault, 1984). Through history, and probably also through one's lifetime, there are transformations of the relation to the self. An example of a particular relation to the self is to understand the self as a collection of drives that are in need of moderation. Another example is to constantly seek to reveal one's true self and try to act and think accordingly as authentic as possible. More generally, this perspective allows us to understand notions as individuality and identity not in some kind of essential way, but as part of a rather specific objectivation and problematisation of the self (or others). It makes it possible to understand the self (subjectivity) not as «natural» or given, but as «historical», shaped, mobilised and called into being by concrete (changing) technologies and discourses (discursive regimes). In this line, thus, to explore the figure at the ethical level is to focus on her subjectivity; the way she relates to herself (and experiences a certain need), and connected to this, relates to others and to the world (Simons, Masschelein and Quaghebeur, 2005).

For this exploration, then, we will concentrate on the discourse and more concretely on the arguments in favour of philosophy with children. However, we do not want to discuss, let alone assess, these arguments. As stated above our aim is to arrive at a sketch of the figure (the philosophizing subject) that is called into being and emerges in and through the discourse and of the way philosophy appears in this discourse<sup>2</sup>. In the first section of this paper we try to show how philosophical thinking becomes something that is wanted by a subject in need of self actualisation,

2. In reference to this it is important to emphasize that we will minimize references to particular authors. When we refer to authors, it is not to legitimize or criticize their ideas, but to stress the kind of subject that is produced through these ideas.

self management and diversity in a changing environment. The second section indicates how this discourse in its contingency, is highly ambivalent. At one hand philosophy is meant to be mobilized and set free and at the other, it is meant to be controlled and invested in. We argue that our will to implement philosophy in the curriculum and to see it as an activity for and with children is connected to the mobilization of what Bröckling (2006) describes as the entrepreneurial self. In the conclusion we sketch another figure and another meaning of philosophy. One that is probably less present in actual discourses within philosophy with children, but therefore not less present in philosophical practices.

## 2. ABOUT THE FIGURE THAT WANTS TO PHILOSOPHIZE WITH CHILDREN

### 2.1. *Philosophy with children and the need for self actualisation and self determination*

A first element that we want to indicate is the current attention, within the discourse on philosophy with children, for self actualisation and self determination. However, this discourse does no longer contain the formerly familiar idea, related to self determination, that intellectual abilities are to be divided into psychological developmental categories and evaluated by corresponding intelligent tests. The possibility to actualise and determine oneself now entails a radical break with traditional thinking in terms of «normal development». In this discourse self actualisation is no longer related to normalised school careers but to individual life choices and personalised assessments. Pointing to traditional education, Lipman, one of the prominent defenders of philosophy with children, argued for instance that «considerations like tests and texts and turfs –in short, economic and bureaucratic considerations– have locked the system in place so that, like a boat with a jammed rudder, it is only free to move about in circles» (Lipman, 2003, 10). In general education is being criticised within this discourse because it is not able to take into account and to exploit philosophical and other high potentials of children. Through the ministration of expertise in the service of normality, children are approached too much in terms of their stage in a cognitive developmental process, so it sounds. Statements of children that do not confirm to Piaget's pattern, Gareth Matthews (1994) argues, are labelled as «romancing». Cassidy writes in the same line that «it appears to be the adult who decides or dictates what children are ready to «assimilate and understand» (Cassidy, 2007, 67). Furthermore, it is complained that the curriculum does not serve the needs and interest of children, but that it provides clear pathways for the acquisition of «basic» skills to the «world of work» (Splitter and Sharp, 1995). Splitter and Sharps write for example that «the problem, as we see it, is in the “what” and the “how” of teaching, and the often confused and unreasonable demands imposed by systems more driven by political and economic, rather than truly educational, imperatives» (Splitter and Sharp, 1995, 1).

In opposition to these so called deficiency- or normalising approaches of education, philosophy with children is assumed to stand for an alternative approach. One that recognizes and addresses children no longer as passive human beings but as active, critical and creative beings who carry «philosophical» potentials and capacities to reconstruct society. Associated with philosophy, it is argued that the child is of major importance to mobilize and to improve society. In this context children are addressed as «change agents» who are able to transform society by positioning themselves as philosophical individuals (Gehrett, 1999, 51). As «change agent» the child is no longer considered as bearer of values and meanings, but as an individual who has the capacity to construct and reconstruct values and meanings of life in interaction with the environment. The rigid division between those who are thinking about the great metaphysical questions regarding life, and the child who does not (yet) think at all, is replaced by an approach in which «each of us can play an active role in determining our own fate and, to an extent, that of the world itself» (Splitter and Sharp, 1995, 173). Furthermore philosophical questions, in this understanding, are no longer general or abstract questions such as «What is the meaning of life?» and «Does God exist?», but very concrete questions as: «Who am I?», «What are my aims?», «How does one have to deal with difficult situations in lifetime?», «What kind of person do I want to become?» or «Does my life have enough meaning?» (Brenifier, 2005).

Within the debate about the question if children are able to pursue philosophical issues or whether they lack the intellectual abilities and the conceptual apparatus that would allow them to reflect philosophically, it is argued that children do not intend to define abstract concepts and participate in the formal cultural practice of doing philosophy (as adults do). As Matthews writes «emphasizing the techniques, puts things the wrong way around» (Matthews, 1984, 2). Children, so it is argued, rather feel the need to make sense of their individual experiences and to locate their meaning by clarifying the concepts that are at work (Splitter and Sharp, 1995; Reed and Johnson, 1999; Gehrett, 2001; Murriss, 2008b). As such, concrete questions and stories that are taken up in manuals on philosophy with children do not focus in the first place on exercises in logical thinking or technical philosophy, but as Bodegraven and Kopmels (2005) write, on possibilities to express «real» opinions, needs, feelings, emotions... Fisher describes these questions as concrete elements or clues which allow to direct oneself to the process of self actualisation. Other examples of these kinds of self actualisation elements are for example concrete comments of the teacher during the philosophical inquiry taken up in the manuals as well: «This is the first time I have heard Jasbir volunteer her own opinion» or «Kirsty showed she was able to self correct when he stuck out to his opinion against the others...» (Fisher, 1998, 85).

These elements indicate that it is not in the first place important to give a truthful representation of a certain reality and adapt knowledge, but that everyone has an opinion and that one must diagnose individual needs and interests in function of self actualisation and self determination. In relation

to this, philosophy with children does not focus «on doctrine or the works of the great philosophers, P4C opts for a more problem-solving and less doctrinal approach, paying more attention to training the children in a way of thinking» (UNESCO, 2007, 11).

In this way, philosophy does no longer function as a kind of exclusive-mechanism and does not assume a difference in position between the intellectual and the non intellectual, the philosopher and the child. Both children and adults are regarded as individuals who have the capacity to question the world around them. As such, philosophy is no longer seen as the privilege of the few, but as a capacity that has to be developed (Cam, 2000, 12; Murriss, 2008b, 675). Hence, the challenge of current defenders of philosophy with children is to provide «children with opportunities to develop thinking skills that will allow them to understand and to guide their relationship with the world, with other people and with themselves» (UNESCO, 2007, 7).

Accordingly, what is suggested in the discourse on philosophy with children is that the school should be transformed into a community of inquiry in view of stimulating processes and in particular offering resources and opportunities «to foster skills and attitudes which enable children to address, in a structured, deliberative way, that which they themselves have identified as important» (Splitter and Sharp, 1995, 70; Lipman *et al.*, 1977; Cam, 1995). A concrete community of inquiry then is mostly (but not necessary) arranged in a circle conducive to dialogue, which means that children have to sit comfortable, close enough for eye-contact and unstrained listening, in a room free of distraction of movement and noise, but rich of stimuli to encourage creative, critical and creative thinking. Examples of such stimuli are for example philosophical questions, stories, paintings, role play, performing arts, etc. In relation to this it is argued that

there is no precise understanding of the ingredients that make for effective transfer, but we would highlight (a) a capacity to orchestrate and apply an appropriate range of thinking skills and dispositions, and (b) a focus on the concepts and principles which underlie the subject matter being considered and which, by definition, must be thought about, rather than simply learned (Splitter and Sharp, 1995, 73).

Furthermore, and in line with the foregoing, philosophy in education does not only appeal to a figure who is independent from external control, but one who has the capacity to solve individual (and collective) problems, to be self-responsible, to express one's opinions, to develop personal understanding (own character, strengths and weaknesses), to remove boundaries and to criticize unsupported claims and weak reasoning (*cf.* Lipman, 2003, 218; Long, 2005; Murriss, 2008b). The community of inquiry, as such, is regarded as *a method* based upon «the collection of rational procedures through which individuals can identify where they have gone wrong in their thinking; in short, it is the method of systematic self-correction» (Lipman, 2003, 163). In the community of inquiry it is about facilitating and providing knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to reflect upon this process and to

generate permanent new knowledge and «generic aspects of critical and creative thinking» (Lipman, 2003, 229). Within this problematization, it is argued to focus on effective tools to enable children to think for themselves by learning to ask relevant questions, detect assumptions, recognize faulty reasoning, and gain competences in the ability to make sense of the world. In this sense the main importance of philosophy with children is to «give children the tools they need to question their situation and to begin the search for constructive ways to change or transform it» (Fisher, 1998, 88). Accordingly, the teacher here is someone who provides means and ends to maximize children's self actualisation, i.e. to gain information about individual needs that are related to critical and creative thinking.

Accordingly, in this discourse philosophizing means developing specific skills, capacities and competences to think for oneself, where thinking for oneself is understood in terms of determining the course of one's own life through self-reflection, self-correction and self-judgement (Lipman, 2003). The community of inquiry implies in other words that the child acquires at her disposal specific skills and competences to diagnose and satisfy particular needs and interests. This does not point to a kind of normative personality ideal (i.e. the ideal of the cultivated man), but to the norm of individuality itself. It is a norm that shows itself in the belief in the nearly limitless capacity of the individual to actualize oneself (and to design one's own life). In this experience, philosophy becomes in other words a potential productive investment. To state it differently, the figure that wants to philosophize, i.e. (to learn) to think for oneself is the child that is in need of self actualisation and self determination and that understands philosophy as an efficient way to invest in this process.

## *2.2. Philosophy with children and the need for self-management (or self-direction) in a learning environment*

On the basis of what we indicated in the previous section we can already, point to two characteristic features of the figure that wants to philosophize. First, there is a strong emphasis on the fact that everybody is capable to reflect on one's life and to actualize and direct it without the intervention of others. Secondly, there is also a strong emphasis on the fact that each individual has philosophical potential (capital) at his or her disposal that has to be developed. In other words, the will to philosophize demands the willingness to see life (or the meaning of life) as something that can be taken in one's own hands that can be worked on, and for which one is responsible. To know and to think about the meaning of life becomes in other words something every individual is responsible for and has to invest in. Accordingly what is claimed is that «resting content with what we have as though we had uncovered the absolute and final truth of things, is to remove ourselves from the possibilities of further questioning and discovery, and to renounce the ongoing inquiry in favour of dogmatism and complacency» (Splitter

and Sharp, 1995, 170). This means that the meaning of life here is attached not to life as vitality, but to life as a subjective state or an individual matter that can be expressed in terms of costs-benefits analysis: some forms of life, some ways of being and thinking, are more worth to live than others, and people are willing to learn how to optimize their life (and the meaning of their life), or at least they are willing to learn to look at the meaning of their life as something to be analysed in terms of optimization possibilities and «informed choices» (Trickey and Topping, 2004, 369). Ida Jongsmá (in Carpels and Karssing, 2000, 89) refers in this matter to the need to become aware of those things in life which are more important than others by analysing procedures, assumptions, methodologies, points of view, bias and prejudice. In this form of thinking philosophy does not appear as a tool to find the right answer, but explicitly as the «ability» and «disposition» to reflect upon individual (or collective) life processes and to diagnose and resolve individual (or collective) life-problems or manipulations (Lipman, 2003, 197; Winstantley, 2008, 90; Law, 2008). The discourse of philosophizing with children is thus closely related to a discourse where the individual is addressed as entrepreneur (Bröckling, 2006; Masschelein and Simons, 2002, 2006; Rose, 2008). After all, not so much finding the right answer, the right knowledge, the right theory or the right opinion is what matters, but the disposition and mobilization of those skills and attitudes that make it possible to realize one's own way of thinking and way of life. Life (or the meaning of life) here is thus not only something one needs to actualize but it also appears as an object of value judgments and is related to the question whether different forms of life can or should be valued differently. Accordingly, what is suggested is that «a child has the ability and therefore the potential to choose what kind of person she wants to be. [...]. She is empowered not by knowledge itself but by the wisdom she gains and then expresses through intelligent, informed, creative and caring use of [...] knowledge» (Gehrett, 1999, 64-65). What is emphasized here is the fact that the meaning of life is not something that is given but something that needs to be understood as the result of one's own initiative, of informed choices and investments: something that can be obtained. It is argued that all claims to knowledge have to be considered in order to expand the limits of our thinking. The challenge according to the protagonists of philosophy with children is to «encourage children to bring examples from their own personal experience» in order to explore key concepts and assumptions (Haynes and Murrís, 2001, 7-8). As such, philosophy with children is not about just uttering opinions, but about opinions understood in terms of potential investment. This notion of investment links to what Nikolas Rose has described as «the ways in which, in advanced liberal ethics, each individual is urged to live his life as a kind of enterprise to maximize lifestyle or potential» (Rose, 2008, 40). Philosophizing, then, implies taking up a critical and objective attitude towards oneself: this means that one knows one's resources (insights, experiences, opinions, ideas, capacities, emotions, rationalities etc.) and can employ them in view of a permanent optimization of one's own life on the basis of permanent reflection, that one is taking initiative instead of just

reacting and has an eye for new problems that occur (Korthagen, 2004). In other words, the will to philosophize implicates that the child (the teacher, etc.) has to make her own potential or human capital transparent and employable in function of the permanent optimization of one's own life, what is in fact the controlling of one's own life, one's own experiences, opinions, feelings, relations, etc (Splitter and Sharp, 1995). It is about directing oneself not guided from outside, but from an inside (an interior) which can be made transparent in all respects, exchanged, calculated and charted.

The meaning of life then has to be decomposed, as Nikolas Rose (2008) writes, «into a series of distinct and discrete objects that can be rendered visible, isolated, decomposed, stabilized, frozen, banked, stored, commoditized, accumulated, exchanged and traded across time and space, organs and species, and diverse contexts and enterprises, in the service of bio-economic objectives» (Rose, 2008, 46). Whether it is the transfer of ideas, emotions, opinions or personal experiences, a «molecularisation is conferring a new mobility on the elements of life, enabling them to enter new circuits –organic, interpersonal, geographical, and financial» (Rose, 2008, 46).

In short, the current experience of the will to philosophize is connected to the experience of philosophy as added value and investment. Accordingly, someone who thinks for oneself is someone who has the potential to think in a critical and creative way and who is prepared to see this potential as a resource to invest in. The will to philosophize with children refers in this sense not only to the will to be critical and creative and to become what you want, but also to the responsibility to control and manage one's own ideas in a responsible, calculating and proactive way (cf. Masschelein and Simons, 2002; Simons, 2006).

### 2.3. *Philosophy with children and the need to be more different than others*

A third element that emerges within the discourse on philosophy with children relates to the emphasis on difference and innovation. In this sense the community of inquiry functions not only as a means to acquire knowledge and information but demands also for a reconsideration of decisions and perspectives and the production of new possibilities of self actualisation: «it provokes further questioning, and opens up opportunities to sympathize and empathize with» (Murriss, 2002, 5; Schertz, 2007). Philosophy is thus not only about knowing better or more profoundly but also about a different use of knowledge and skills and the sensitivity to notice new openings that lead to a greater «return» (Murriss, 2002, 8). This use and sensitivity open up to what is virtually present and to potential new ways of thinking or new stories, so it is argued. Accordingly children are likewise addressed as individuals who differ from adults: not primarily in terms of age, psychological or scholastic development, but in terms of their different vision of the world (UNESCO, 2007). It is argued that «the young child's ability to imagine new possibilities to

think creatively may be even more valuable than her mature counterpart's greater experience and linguistic sophistication» (Splitter and Sharp, 1995, 97). Hence, children are understood as individuals who make other distinctions than adults do and appear therefore as a kind of providers of added value in the sense that they offer the possibility to look at things from another perspective (Murriss, 2002; UNESCO, 2007). It is suggested that «children's thinking shows us another side of the world, that is, how the world could have been. [...] The world as-it-is, is too often taken for granted by adults, including adult philosophers. So children's lack of experience could be an advantage rather than a disadvantage when they do philosophy» (Van der Leeuw, 1991, 13-14; Murriss, 2000, 272). It is precisely from this point of view that philosophical questions of children or what is described as the unusual among the usual (Anthonie and Moors, 2004, 13) appears as a productive undertaking. Together with philosophical stories, poems and «work of art» philosophical questions by children are regarded as effective stimuli for a particular form of thinking and acting which allows to discover and explore new points of view and to explore more creative ideas about the world and our future. Murriss writes: «Exploring stories with others in an environment that actively nourishes and encourages talk about thinking and emotions helps students (and teachers) to construct more profound self-narratives and understanding of others» (Murriss, 2002, 14). As such they can be put at work in order to realize further reflection on one's life and in order to arouse the imagination regarding alternative possibilities and opportunities for action: «Narrowly speaking it is about the ability to construct a new understanding or to establish a new skill or product» (Lee, 2007, 8).

Typical for this discourse is that philosophical stories furthermore no longer function as means to position and orient a child (and oneself as child) in accordance with the norm. What is being supplied in so called philosophical questions and stories are in particular the necessary «tools» to objectify realized possibilities and to arouse the combination of dormant possibilities and opportunities in an original and successful way (*cf.* Simons, 2006). It is about «a process that involves making connections between what people (think they) know and what is new» and «the construction of new ideas» (Murriss, 2008b, 671). The use of creative resources like poetry and art is therefore motivated by the constant need «to combine the unlimited sources of possibilities in an unlimited way» and so to continue the optimization of one's own life in all its components (*cf.* Simons, 2006, 122). In this sense one speaks about the philosophical community of inquiry as an environment that actualizes an «enormous number of paths, roadways, avenues, and boulevards that crisscross the terrain that is already familiar through constant use, and that suggest hitherto unrelated connections or clusters of connections to those adventurous thinkers who are looking to explore new terrains» (Lipman, 2003, 255).

The possibilities to think of something new are endless. Of crucial importance, however, is the difference with what already exists: «These agonies persist until a new disbelief emerges, bringing about a newly problematic situation.

This jettisoning of the old problematic, product of the previous critical thinking, and its replacement with the new problematic, freshly and richly permeated by doubt, is what creative thinking consists in» (Lipman, 2003, 254). Being a philosopher therefore means creating distinctions. Additionally it is claimed that «[e]ach individual in class needs to situate the investigation in their own concrete historical, emotional, social and cultural context, bringing a unique perspective to the enquiry» (Murriss, 2008a, 106). In this sense, creative thinkers are described as «those who [...] “think for themselves”, and who are not stampeded into thinking the way the crowd thinks [...] thereby generating astonishment and wonder» (Lipman, 2003, 245-246). Whether or not something appears to be illuminating or new, in short: when something experiences valuation it depends on the mobilisation of individual (or collective) capacities to upgrade the self. In other words, the emphasis within philosophy with children on being «open» to one another and on expressing one's own thoughts, ideas and feelings in dialogue with others, can be seen as «a cover word for measuring the other in terms of a mirror of self-concern, and [...] for measuring social interaction in terms of the market exchange of confession» (*cf.* Sennet, 1977, 10).

This means that the promise of difference or diversity hides at the meantime also always a threat: «Be special ... or you will be eliminated» (*cf.* Bröckling, 2006). In short, the current experience of the will to philosophize is connected to the experience of philosophy as added value that constantly needs to be produced and with the experience of seeing everything and everybody as a possible resource for mobilising this process. In other words the will to philosophize is the will of a figure who is constantly searching for difference. As such «[d]ifferences between people are not [experienced as] «a hindrance, but as an asset» (Murriss, 2008a, 106). This does not mean that confrontations are not important in the discourse on philosophy with children, but that they are translated into conflicts for which there can and has to be developed a solution.

The need to be creative and the need to philosophize reinforce each other in a way that creativity is regarded as a necessary economical force that needs to be applied to optimize one's own life. It facilitates new possibilities and increases the profit or return. Differences appear in this sense as resources to continue the endless search for new needs (ideas, talents, experiences, skills...) and are regarded as investments in one's own life. To optimize one's life thus demands permanent innovation and ceaseless creativity. «Everybody not only has to be simply creative, but more creative than the others; and nobody can be sure of finding takers for the new combinations» (Bröckling, 2006, 517). This implicates furthermore the fact that acting is always a risk and based on speculation. Speaking and acting implicates always in a certain sense a risk and a challenge. It is as Bröckling writes: «The opportunities for success only waves at hand at those incurring the risk of failure upon their shoulders» (Bröckling, 2006, 518).

3. THE FIGURE THAT WANTS TO PHILOSOPHIZE IS THE ENTREPRENEURIAL SELF WHICH HAS A TACIT ALLIANCE WITH THE CREATIVE IMPERATIVE

The exploration of the arguments for philosophy in education show how philosophy within these discourses is understood as a kind of anthropological potential, (as something that everyone has) that has to be controlled and strengthened by methods and exercises –as a competence that can be learned. *However, as the discourse of philosophy with children is addressing philosophizing as a competence and is arguing that philosophy opens up possibilities to think and to produce something new and different, it also governs children to behave and to think in a very particular way as well.* This means that through discourses such as philosophy with children (and the practices/technologies related to it), children *learn* that a higher value is given to exercises on self-expression and self-actualisation, in terms of opinions and the actualisations of individual (or collective) needs (deficiencies) and interest (potential, perspectives), than on for example a correct representation or an adequate mastering of techniques or of a discipline (*cf.* also Quaghebeur, 2006, 502). This «insight» does not just refer to a new indication of a particular norm, behaviour or code (as supposed by e.g. Vandenbroeck and Bouverne-De Bie, 2006), but shows in the first place how specifically children and teachers as particular subjects are supposed to think, act, feel, and believe. It shows the conduct of the philosophical child that thinks less in terms of good and bad, than in terms of difference, investment and added value. In this discourse, children for instance learn, that philosophy and the possibility to actualise and determine (the meaning of) their life itself is something they have and that it depends upon their will and responsibility to invest in it or not. So everybody is free to philosophize and to be critical and creative or not, but if you do not take this opportunity you will not feel free. Many techniques, exercises and strategies are designed to realise this kind of activation, whereby the subject is assumed to speak out or express one's opinion which relates to stakes, needs (problems, deficiencies) and interests (potentials or talents) and their possible solutions. This means that within the discourse on philosophy with children, children are invited or interpellated to look at themselves and others as resources or potential to invest in, in order to develop innovative strategies and material. In this sense, it is not a norm that is directing the way, but future possibilities to be innovative (Bröckling, 2006, 518). In order to survive, the child must, thus, continuously offer other combinations than his competitors, or the same commodities in better quality or at a more appealing quality, more efficient, attractive, and so forth. And success here is only for the moment. As soon as competitors catch on, the creative aspect of it vanishes. The figure who wants to philosophize is thus not just someone who has liberated himself from regular or normal life, and is thus free, it is at the same time someone who is nowhere free of thoughts, expressions, interests, etc.

At this point we introduce the imperative of creativity which means that philosophy in a certain way standardizes the breach with standard solutions.

As Bröckling writes: «The creative imperative necessitates permanent deviation; its enemies are homogeneity, compulsory identity, standardization, repetition» (Bröckling, 2006, 517). In this sense we can say, that within the discourse of philosophy at school it is not the child that is at stake in the first place, but her creative – entrepreneurial potential: the child is understood here in the first place as a subject with individual needs and interests. To the extent that children are expected to be active, responsive and creative, in all life-circumstances, the mobilization of innovative potential is itself privatised and individualized. This means that entrepreneurship not only forms the goal of all these interpretations of philosophy, but that it is its privileged means as well (Bröckling, 2006). In this sense, we can say that the discourse on philosophy at school governs the child in such a way as to problematise the self as the holder of capacities to think in another ever more creative way and as the representative of needs and interests to develop these capacities, while presenting itself as the means of self-actualisation and self-determination.

What we want to highlight here is that the creative imperative, is not a kind of norm that has to be appropriated (or can be resisted) as such. The type of norm that is expressed in the creative imperative is rather a norm in which one unlearns to orient oneself to a norm. Hence, the creative imperative seems to include a very specific experience of being free to think for oneself at the one hand, yet at the other hand it means being expelled of normal life. Implicitly the figure that wants to philosophize makes it clear that there is nothing the child can hold on to, other than itself, its own survival. The experience that everyone has to give their all, so as not to lose their childhood, is expressed in the need to be more creative than others, against which the outcomes of being successful are measured. And what is measured today as successful may no longer be successful tomorrow. As such what is really at stake in the discourse on philosophy with children is the provision of permanently new information about possible forms of success or failure. Indicating the creative imperative itself as a new norm, does not so much function as a critique, yet refers to something the figure who wants to philosophize precisely seems to will.

#### 4. THINKING ABOUT THE CHILD BEYOND THE FIGURE OF THE ENTREPRENEURIAL SELF

In this last part we want to introduce another figure of the child, a figure opposed to a child that wants to be creative, that is a figure that refuses to take the attitude of the entrepreneur. This does not mean that it is someone who is against creativity, individuality or diversity and in this sense refuses to use the tools provided and means offered by programmes such as philosophy with children. Indeed, as Bröckling (2006) writes: «in face of the exactions of the creative imperative, neither the pathos of refusal nor the furore of raising the stakes will be sufficient. When deviance becomes a normative demand, flagrant non-conformism emerges as absolute conformism» (Bröckling, 2006, 519). Instead, for the figure we want to

sketch, the imperative to be creative –to objectify and problematise her own behaviour as the behaviour of an entrepreneurial self–, does no longer make any sense. It is someone who is deaf to the call to consider oneself as an entrepreneurial self. Maybe one could say that it is someone who operates within actual discourses on education at the limit: as a limit or shadow figure (Vansielegheem, 2006). This is not an unusual, wacko or rare figure. Indeed, in much of our daily practices we will recognize features of this figure. Within entrepreneurial discourses and practices, however, she is invisible, withdrawn from light and out of sight. We, however, do not want to psychologise this figure (as personality) or give it a substance. We want to sketch this figure at the level of her relation to herself, to the world and to others.

Concretely, we understand this figure here as someone who experiences what is happening here and now, what takes place in our thought. For this figure, then, asking «philosophical» questions is not a cognitive act (something one can plan to do or can have a strategic effect). Experience and asking philosophical questions have to do with oneself, but not with one's individual or private self. As Agamben (1993) writes experience is singular and puts the self at stake. It is pure passion and abandonment. Passion is always singular because it in essence has to do with being affected by singularity. It takes no account of science and expertise. Therefore experience or asking existential questions is incompatible with science. Experience and as such asking existential questions is an activity one undergoes –it is not intentional, not at the side of activity, but at the side of passivity and exposition (Agamben, 1993). The figure we want to bring up here is thus someone who exposes herself and puts herself at stake; someone who puts her self under study and thinks about it, which is different from reflecting upon possible choices and investments. For this reason experience has to do with attention, seeing, listening, exposing, being present and opening. It is someone who devotes herself totally to what is happening. But this devotion is not one of cognition (calculating future choices) but one of passion and curiosity. This is why reality presents itself to that figure in her singularity and also why that figure concerns herself with the questions «what is happening here and now?» and «what has to be done?» (Biesta, 2009, 15). Here (in this figure) a philosophizing child is not an entrepreneur but someone who exposes herself to the world. A world however that is not something that is given and asks of the child to submit herself to it by use of tools and instruments. Instead, the world is that what shows itself in (and as) the question about our living together (with others, with things, etc.) that manifests itself for the philosophizing child. This question is not a juridical or humanitarian one to judge on the base of particular needs and interests, but, in a particular way, a *political* one. Political questions, as we understand them here, are the questions asked by those who do not want to defend or acquire something (skills, perspectives, potential, needs) but by those who are curious and passionate and who want to know all about what is happening here and now. In this sense the child is not someone who wants to change the world. She accepts the world as it is and enters (or absorbs) it without

knowing beforehand what it wants of her and what she wants of it. This child does not care for self-actualisation and self-correction or self-judgement. Much more this child is someone who is shocked and astonished by that what has touched her. She is neither in the condition to maintain, nor to forget it, but takes care for it (*or embodies it*). It is furthermore someone who is mute and awaiting (Agamben, 1993), someone who is able to see and to listen to the world as it is. Being able to see and to listen does not imply an entrepreneurial attitude, but a radical attitude of acceptance and attention. For sure, also an entrepreneurial attitude requires a kind of attentiveness. This attentiveness, however, refers to the ability to improve one's position in relation to the permanent question for differences (i.e. different perspectives) to invest in. The acceptance of and attention for the world is more radical in the sense that it implies an attitude of exposition and the neglect of activities that are generally thought to be self-interested, profitable, and advantageous. It is the acceptance that there is no inner or true self that has to be dis(-re)covered. It implies an attitude by which one changes, transforms, and *transfigures* oneself. Agamben describes this transformed self as someone whose consciousness collapsed and, seeks to flee in all directions, someone who has no other content than its own de-subjectivation and becomes witness to its own disorder (Agamben, 1999, 106). This transformation of the self in either of its directions is not about using one's passions for something but quite simply to give way to one's passions (Foucault, 2001).

For this child, philosophy refers not to a potential or resource to invest in, but to the experience of putting oneself at stake and to transform or transfigure the self. This does not mean fantasizing, imagining or dreaming, but becoming mute and astonished. This becoming can never be anticipated, planned or foreseen. Philosophy, therefore, is always something that is unknown, impossible, and not wanted, something that does not depend on knowledge or science, power or will, but that has to do with a kind of passion or experience that confronts us with the question of living together (Kohan, 2002). Philosophy, here, includes furthermore always an aspect of «I do not know what is happening to me?» and «I do not know what to do». It always has to do with examining representations which appear in the mind. Concretely, this means that philosophy, instead of an investment in the self, here, has to do with the acceptance that we are naked and always have to think again. What is needed therefore is a concrete effort as a kind of discipline of the body and the mind which is not normalizing our position, but in a sense weakens it. These exercises do not have to do with providing stimulating (learning) tools, but with poor practices, or practices that expose ourselves to the world. Poor practices are practices that invite to go outside into the world and put oneself in an uncomfortable, or weak position (Masschelein, 2006, 2010). They are practices to enter an attentive condition, a condition in which something can happen and one can be transformed. Questions, dialogues, paintings, role plays or performing acts then do no longer operate as material or exercises to invest in the self, but as material that touches and exposes the self. These materials and exercises do

not ask for a method, but are an invitation to come into the world (the dance, the play, the painting...) and to see, hear and feel what is unknown and new; i.e. to *experience* childhood.

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