

# Teaching to Lie and Obey: Nietzsche on Education

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*To understand Nietzsche's view of education requires us to grasp the importance Nietzsche attaches to being embedded in a particular historical and cultural frame. Education is, at least in the early stages, a matter of teaching the child to see and to value particular things or, in Nietzsche's way of putting this, teaching the child to lie. Here I develop an interpretation contrary to those who emphasise Nietzsche's radical individualism and thus view his Overman in subjectivistic terms. I argue that Nietzsche's most important lesson is not that we are to create anything radically new, but rather that we are to take up a serious engagement with respect to what we stand for.*

## INTRODUCTION

Our contemporary postmodern condition—the condition we are supposed to find ourselves in, and which we read and hear about all the time—teaches us that there is a multiplicity of viewpoints on what is to be considered good. In this so-called pluralist society convincing arguments for the objectivity of the good, while perhaps possible, are seldom wholly unproblematical. In consequence of this the traditional picture of education, as a relation between the educator on the one hand and the child who is to be raised in the light of a particular goal or end on the other, becomes unsettled. A pluralist society is a source of reservations about the idea that education can be conceived as a matter of making the child familiar with, and initiating her into, a cultural heritage. Here education undergoes a radical shift: the child herself, her creativity and spontaneity, is valued more than the act of bestowal on the part of the educator. The educator in this view should step down as the representative of a particular view of life, and content himself with the role of facilitator of the education of the child, who is thought to be capable of discovering within herself what she really wants and capable therefore of giving meaning to her own life. Self-education, conceived in terms of the child's choice of goods with the help of the educator-as-facilitator, thus moves to centre-stage. This shift of educational

emphasis appears to allow a break with the cultural heritage—for the educator does not any longer aim, explicitly or implicitly, at preserving the past; it seems to create possibilities beyond any existing culture's entrenched ways and customs.

This philosophical problematising of tradition can be said to have started with Nietzsche. By deconstructing and destroying modernity's pride in reason as the unquestionable ground for truth and value, Nietzsche provided the outlines of what we now call postmodernity. What has been in this respect exercising many minds in the context of education is Nietzsche's Overman: the individual who razes predominant values and meanings to the ground (hence breaking with tradition) and puts his own radically alternative values and meanings in their place. In an article in *Educational Theory* Johnston argues that Nietzsche's self-imposed task is not to reconstruct culture, but is 'to point the way to the possibility of a new individual, a self-overcoming individual, one able to create and live within his or her own valuations'.<sup>1</sup> The educational attraction of this is obvious: the child who asserts her own self thereby guarantees educational and cultural renewal. However, without elucidation of such superficially appealing ideas as that of 'creating one's own values and meanings', and without clarification of how one is to understand the concept of the self, this particular use of Nietzsche can be very problematical. For solipsism, subjectivism and interpretations *ex nihilo* are never far away.

In this paper I argue that a subjectivistic understanding of Nietzsche is incorrect, since it fits ill with Nietzsche's view of the importance of being culturally and historically embedded. In the first section I will examine this by giving an account of what Nietzsche means by 'obedience' and by 'lying'. In the second section it will be necessary to deal with his perspectivism. From an educational point of view the importance of being embedded is that the self-development and self-education of the child or, to put it differently, the path on which she has to go to become a true individual, can only be properly understood starting from that cultural and historical embeddedness. This will be explored in the third section. In the fourth section this exploration will be extended and nuanced through an account of Nietzsche's anti-essentialist conception of human being. In the final section I will argue that the important lesson to learn from Nietzsche concerns the business of taking up a serious engagement with what one stands for.

### **OBEDIENCE, OR THE IMPORTANCE OF EMBEDDEDNESS**

Much as one values Nietzsche for his cultural criticism and for his culturally innovative ideas, it would be a mistake to overlook the importance he attaches to obedience. Johnston argues that one cannot infer an anarchistic account of education from Nietzsche's writings because of his emphasis on obedience and discipline in the primary school.<sup>2</sup> However, Johnston fails to give obedience its rightful place. For Nietzsche's account of morality (particularly in *Beyond Good and Evil*,

and more specifically in the chapter 'The Natural History of Morals') shows that obedience is not just about keeping pupils in line, but means obedience to cultural and historical rules, and as such is a moral imperative for all of humankind. The most important thing about every system of morals for Nietzsche is that it is 'a long constraint', a 'tyranny of arbitrary laws'.<sup>3</sup> For such cultural and historical phenomena as virtue, art, music, dancing, reason, spirituality, philosophy, politics and so on the creative act requires not absolute freedom or spontaneous unconstrained development but subordination to what is or at least appears to be 'arbitrary'. It entails a long bondage of the spirit.

The singular fact remains . . . that everything of the nature of freedom, elegance, boldness, dance, and masterly certainty, which exists or has existed, whether it be in thought itself, or in administration, or in speaking and persuading, in art just as in conduct, has only developed by means of the tyranny of such arbitrary law; and in all seriousness, it is not at all improbable that precisely this is 'nature' and 'natural'—and *not laisser-aller!*<sup>4</sup>

The nature of morality inspires us to stay far from an excessive freedom and cultivates the need for restricted horizons. This narrowing of perspective is for Nietzsche a *condition* of life and growth.<sup>5</sup> It is interesting to see how this is prefigured in Nietzsche's second *Unfashionable Observation* (On the Utility and Liability of History for Life). The cure for what he there calls 'the *historical sickness*',<sup>6</sup> i.e. an excess of history which attacks the shaping power of life and no longer understands how to utilise the past as a powerful source of nourishment, is (among others) *the ahistorical*: 'the art and power to be able to *forget* and to enclose oneself in a limited *horizon*'.<sup>7</sup> Human beings cannot live without a belief in something lasting and eternal.<sup>8</sup>

Subordination to the rules of a system of morality should not be understood as a deplorable restriction of an individual's possibilities and creative freedom; on the contrary, it is the necessary determination and limitation of the conditions under which anything can be conceived as possible. Only from within a particular and arbitrary framework can freedom itself be interpreted *as* freedom. In other words, Nietzsche points to the necessity of being embedded in a particular cultural and historical frame. The pervasiveness of this embeddedness can be shown in at least four aspects of Nietzsche's writings.

First, in his critique of morality Nietzsche realises all too well that it is impossible to criticise a system of morals from outside, as a view from nowhere. Instead a particular concretisation is required. *Beyond Good and Evil* may very well, as a prelude to a philosophy of the future, excite dreams about unlooked-for horizons and unknown possibilities. In *The Genealogy of Morals*, however, written by Nietzsche as further elaboration and elucidation of the same themes, he explicitly states that *Beyond Good and Evil* does not imply going beyond good and bad.<sup>9</sup>

Criticising a system of morals inevitably means judging from a particular point of view.

Second, in his representation of the true philosopher Nietzsche insists on not confounding philosophers with philosophical labourers and scientists, for the philosopher's task is the most noble of all tasks: to create values. '*The real philosophers . . . are commanders and lawgivers; they say: "Thus shall it be!"*'<sup>10</sup> The true philosopher's inspiration to determine the whither and the why of humankind does not however emerge out of nothing. Nietzsche makes it unambiguously clear that in order to 'grasp at the future with a creative hand'<sup>11</sup> the philosopher must himself have stood upon the steps of the scientist, of the critic, of the dogmatist, of the moralist and so on. These steps are the basis for the preliminary labour that has to be done before the real act of creation, they are the means, the instruments, the hammer,<sup>12</sup> in short 'a foundation and scaffolding'.<sup>13</sup> The real philosopher hammers on the existing bastion of values, but nonetheless needs the pieces to create his own bastion.

Third, Nietzsche has important things to say about the role language plays in constituting truth. As early as *On Truth and Lies in a Non-moral Sense*, one of his earliest philosophical writings, he urges that what one normally understands by truth is essentially constituted by language: '[the] legislation of language likewise establishes the first laws of truth'.<sup>14</sup> For Nietzsche, speaking a language is a matter of using certain images and metaphors, and hence speaking a language is a subordination of the individual to the general. Speaking the truth then means using customary metaphors, thus signifying the set of common conventions to which one has to subordinate oneself (language is constraint)<sup>15</sup> on pain of being incomprehensible. In *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche specifies this commonness as a conformity in 'groups of sensations'. In order to understand each other it is not sufficient just to use the same words, one also needs 'to employ the same words for the same kind of internal experiences', that is to say, one 'must in the end have experiences *in common*'.<sup>16</sup> In other words, individuals understand each other, speak the truth when having lived together for a fairly long time under similar conditions and as a consequence speak the same language.

Fourth, a human being experiences difficulties in giving an appropriate place to what is not yet given in her embeddedness. She always first lets the familiar, the known world affect her, and only later, slowly and cautiously, admits what is unfamiliar to her, the (to her) unknown world. Nietzsche writes:

Our eyes find it easier on a given occasion to produce a picture already often produced, than to seize upon the divergence and novelty of an impression: the latter requires more force, more 'morality'. It is difficult and painful for the ear to listen to anything new; we hear strange music badly.<sup>17</sup>

When confronted with something unfamiliar a human being typically reacts in a reserved manner, maybe even with a little aversion, since it is

painful seeing and hearing things that are hard to conceive or that go against everything she is accustomed to. 'From our fundamental nature and from remote ages we have been—*accustomed to lying*',<sup>18</sup> Nietzsche writes: this 'lying' should not be understood as a matter of not speaking the truth, but points to the constellation of a particular cultural and historical framework that constitutes human beings' necessarily narrow perspective. This 'lying', and the fact that it is taken for granted, are not deplorable. On the contrary, from the observation that our eyes are hurt when seeing the unfamiliar and that we can only hear new music with great difficulty, it follows that 'lying' is always presupposed in order that the unfamiliar can hurt us at all. To explain this it will be necessary to elaborate on Nietzsche's perspectivism.

### PERSPECTIVISM

For Nietzsche the perspectival is the fundamental condition of life.<sup>19</sup> It is however of the uttermost importance not to interpret this perspectivism in a traditional metaphysical manner, in which reality is understood as an invariant essence, ready out there to be put in perspective by a human being, so that human perspectives on the other hand are conceived as particular variations of that fixed background. Nor does Nietzsche's perspectivism mean that the multiplicity of perspectives should be combined to form a kind of universal overview of the world or a universally valid perspective. Nietzsche makes it unambiguously clear that *there are only perspectives*.<sup>20</sup> To put it differently, Nietzsche tried to overcome the opposition between background and foreground, between 'text' and 'interpretation',<sup>21</sup> between 'absolute knowing' and 'relative knowing',<sup>22</sup> between the 'true world' and the 'seeming world'.<sup>23</sup> Rejecting the conception of an absolute truth consequently means that these distinctions no longer make sense. 'We have done away with the true world: which world remains then? the seeming one maybe? . . . But of course not! *together with the true world we have also done away with the seeming one!*'<sup>24</sup>

The difficulty is that Nietzsche's way of putting this reminds us of the traditional metaphysical terminology and hence suggests a background lying behind a foreground. The point however is that all these expressions—'perspectival', 'seeming world', 'interpretation', and also 'lie', 'exploitation', 'mistake'<sup>25</sup>—should not be understood in the traditional way. There is nothing there to be interpreted, there is not something one can tell a lie or be mistaken about. Rather, Nietzsche means that there is no distinction at all between the true world and the seeming one. 'The opposition between seeming world and true world converts into the opposition between "world" and "nothing".'<sup>26</sup>

Consequently, Nietzsche argues that there is something wrong with the customary *searching* for the truth, since it supposes one has to break through the seeming world in order to attain the real one. Attempting to free oneself from the seeming world however brings to ruin truth itself: 'if, with the virtuous enthusiasm and stupidity of many philosophers,

one wished to do away altogether with the “seeming world”—well, granted that you could do that—at least nothing of your “truth” would thereby remain!’<sup>27</sup> In other words, attempting to dispose of the perspectival is tantamount to giving up the world itself: ‘As if there might remain a world, when one had set aside the perspectival!’<sup>28</sup>

A similar reasoning obtains when Nietzsche speaks of the constitution of the world by language. When he states that because of language ‘the way seems barred against certain other possibilities of world-interpretation’,<sup>29</sup> that expression in language limits the formulability of the world,<sup>30</sup> this does not mean that there is a background out there waiting to be nominated by language. That ‘language has everywhere become an autonomous force that now clasps human beings in its ghostly arms and pushes them in directions in which they do not really wish to go’<sup>31</sup> does not mean human beings aspire to something outside the distinctions put forward by language. Rather it means that language, human beings and world are entangled with one another in such a manner that it is impossible to dispense with language (e.g. in the typically traditional searching for truth), for this would mean at the same time dispensing with human beings themselves.<sup>32</sup>

## EDUCATION AND THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EMBEDDED

In *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche says about education:<sup>33</sup>

Parents involuntarily make something like themselves out of their children—they call that ‘education’; no mother doubts at the bottom of her heart that the child she has borne is thereby her property, no father hesitates about his right to subject it to *his own* ideas and notions of worth.<sup>34</sup>

In view of the importance Nietzsche attaches to obedience, to being embedded, one should not be surprised that he considers initiating the child into a particular constellation of arbitrary laws to be a natural part of her education. For the child, education means, at least in the early stages, being subordinated to a particular view of what is worth living for, and being introduced into a system of beliefs. Education consists in teaching the child to see and to value particular things, to handle a perspective: to lie. The argument goes even further. In view of Nietzsche’s perspectivism one must now say that not initiating the child into a perspective, not teaching him to lie is educationally speaking not even an option: the child makes himself familiar with a perspective he cannot ignore since this is the precondition for making sense of anything and exploring the unfamiliar. Put differently, because of the necessity of being embedded a human being is moulded into a particular shape that he cannot do without.

My understanding of Nietzsche is consequently at variance with any understanding which argues for a radical individualism and takes the individual to be the point of reference of all values and truths. Johnston<sup>35</sup> for example tilts the scales too strongly towards the

individual as a self-affirming autonomous agent and hence disregards the epistemologically and ethically constitutive importance of the individual's embeddedness for what she affirms as true and valuable. He even claims that the individual put forward by Nietzsche is the antithesis of the social realm. For Nietzsche, Johnston writes, 'there is no question of a reconciliation between the realms of the individual and the social'.<sup>36</sup> Referring to Dewey, he makes it look as if the Nietzschean individual can withdraw herself from social embeddedness since she apparently has no need to refer her own action to that of others.<sup>37</sup> Adopting a thoroughly Nietzschean stand on education therefore requires, in Johnston's opinion, a break with education conceived as a matter of 'making familiar with' and of being initiated into a particular cultural inheritance, that is as a matter of socialisation in this rich sense. In consequence education becomes essentially *self-education*.

It is not hard to see that focusing in this manner on the individual is greatly welcomed by progressive educational movements such as child-centred pedagogies. In their critique of the traditional educational model, characterised simply as a bestowal of values by the educator, they show their concern with the child's personal identity. In this view initiating the child into a particular view of life does injustice to her personal identity, her true self is suppressed, suffocated and not given the opportunity to develop into what it 'really' is. Education should by contrast create room for the self-development of the child's true self: this seems to be the educational lesson to be learned from Rousseau, Rogers, Steiner and Freinet among others. An emphasis on a particular kind of experiential learning, supported by a distinctive conception of the nature of experience, warrants the child giving meaning to her own life.

Now there is nothing wrong with the notion that socialisation in some sense resembles indoctrination, and is, from a particular point of view, a kind of injustice; nor is there a problem with concern for the child's personal identity. The problem however is that the way in which the child-centred movement conceives the individual only allows a subjectivistic, even solipsistic, interpretation of self-education. Johnston rightly argues that Nietzsche's critique of the conception of absolute truth and universal values gives rise to perspectivism. However he treads on dangerous ground when claiming that for Nietzsche, from an epistemological point of view, all truths, and from a moral point of view, all values, exist only 'as a matter of individual perspective', that for Nietzsche 'truths are reducible in the last to the individual', and that '[t]he new system of values provided by and for this individual takes its point of reference from the individual, and not the outward society, church, state, nation, or culture'.<sup>38</sup>

## **EDUCATION ON THE GROUND OF AN ANTI-ESSENTIALISTIC CONCEPTION OF HUMAN BEINGS AND WORLD**

Emphasising the constitutive importance of being embedded does not however mean that one cannot give any meaningful sense to

self-education. For the fact that every human being, because of her embeddedness, is affected with a particular perspective or moulded into a particular shape, does not necessarily mean for Nietzsche that she is *limited* to that particular perspective or shape. The child's self is not constituted *permanently* by her being embedded. Alteration, development, in short self-education, remain possible. Nietzsche does indeed argue that the merit of every system of morals lies in narrowing human beings' perspective: nonetheless he is bold in his critique of *particular* moral interpretations that are available. To be more precise, the thorn in his (philosophical) side is not that the system of morals moulds human beings and their world into a particular shape, but that it *absolutises* that particular shape: Nietzsche thus criticises, in the name of multi-interpretability and multivalence, any fossilisation of moral interpretation.

For Nietzsche a human being is 'the *animal not yet determined*'.<sup>39</sup> She is an animal, i.e. embodied and driven by instincts, but at the same time she is distinguished from the animal since her instincts do not limit her to one particular model.<sup>40</sup> Nietzsche has Zarathustra say that a human being is 'a rope, fastened between animal and Superman', she is a bridge, not a goal, her destiny is to go 'up and beyond'.<sup>41</sup> Indefiniteness, not reason, is the crucial distinction between human beings and animals. Following from this Nietzsche sets himself the task of placing human-kind back into nature:

In effect, to translate man back again into nature; to master the many vain and visionary interpretations and subordinate meanings which have hitherto been scratched and daubed over the eternal original text, *homo natura*.<sup>42</sup>

One can therefore argue that Nietzsche's view of human beings is of a naturalistic kind, understanding this however not in an essentialistic or reductionistic way. The 'nature' of a human being is to have no essence; particular historical manifestations are only an exemplification of this. Rather this 'nature' can be understood as an empty place from which a multiplicity of possibilities can arise. It is however important to notice that 'empty place' and 'nature' merely act as metaphors to criticise the prevailing uniformity with which human being is represented. *De facto* she never is an empty place, she never is indefinite, but always already a particular possibility, without reduction to which there is no sense at all in speaking about other potential possibilities. The *homo natura* is the original text scratched upon with interpretations and meanings, but which one cannot speak about at all without those interpretations and meanings. In this sense, every human being is unique, and irreducible to a basic pattern since that pattern does not exist.

The world too is for Nietzsche not yet determined. In itself the world *is* not good nor evil, no more than the Alps are beautiful in themselves: it is without essence. If the world carries qualifications, then they do not belong inherently to the world's essence ('The "essence" is lacking')<sup>43</sup>

but are brought about in relation to a human being.<sup>44</sup> Concepts like good and evil only have meaning in reference to human beings. A human being, whom Nietzsche also denominates as a ‘revering animal’, explains the world as a function of her own wishes and needs.<sup>45</sup> Nietzsche eventually even argues that a human being ‘can only understand a world which she herself has *made*’,<sup>46</sup> or rather which she herself has put into perspective. As with the indefiniteness of a human being one should notice here too that the world never *is* indefinite. Without a particular shape there is no sense at all in speaking of other potential shapes.

### EDUCATION AS THE EVERLASTING TASK OF SELF-OVERCOMING

Nietzsche’s view of human being and world sheds additional light on the concept of education. In view of the importance Nietzsche attaches to being embedded and in view of his perspectivism, I have argued that education cannot but be understood as teaching to lie, i.e. as initiating the child into a particular view of what is valuable and worth living for. Mindful of Nietzsche’s view of human being one should now say that any particular moulding of the child is detrimental to what the child really is: not yet determined, unique, irreducible to a basic pattern. Therefore, the pre-eminently educational task—expressed by Nietzsche in the powerful dictum ‘become what you are’<sup>47</sup>—can be defined as a never-ending process of self-overcoming. In other words, human beings’ tragic fate is to live their lives in the ambiguity of, on the one hand, always being of a particular kind without, on the other hand, being allowed to be reduced to, allowed to settle in, that particularisation.<sup>48</sup>

It is of the utmost importance to understand that the child’s educational task, ‘to become what you are’, should be understood as a process that can only get started if a particular mould or pattern is forced upon her. The child’s ‘true self’ is not some sort of nucleus of essential characteristic features, already there as germs waiting to be developed. It arises from within and thanks to the moulding that is offered. In this respect Cooper rightly argues that there is no child-centred pedagogy to be found in Nietzsche because of the importance of obedience and because there is no nucleus one should not counteract.<sup>49</sup> The child’s ‘true self’ lies not deep within herself, but, so to speak, *above her*.

Again it is interesting to see how this is prefigured in Nietzsche’s second *Unfashionable Observation*. Having diagnosed the main problem of contemporary education as its erroneous aim to produce ‘the scientifically oriented person’, i.e. ‘the historically and aesthetically cultivated philistine, the quickly dated up-to-date babbler about the state, the church, and art’, Nietzsche indicates that to break with this education one ‘must help youth express itself, must help illuminate, with the lucidity of concepts, the path of their unconscious resistance against this education and transform it into an aware and outspoken

consciousness'.<sup>50</sup> The child only has thoughts for which she has words, and those words are given to her.<sup>51</sup>

An important question here is how exactly the child proceeds to self-overcoming, in other words how she discovers the possibility of transgression and thus succeeds in surpassing the herd. In view of the importance of being embedded the answer to this question cannot but be that the impetus to self-overcoming arises from embeddedness itself. Education as teaching to lie, the necessary precondition for the child to find her own path, means education as realising that it is *merely* a lie. Education as 'making something like themselves out of their children', as teaching the child to put things into perspective, means passing through what is worth living for without pretending that the perspective the child is initiated into, is universal and absolute in nature. 'I should think that today we are at least far from the ridiculous immodesty that would be involved in decreeing from our corner, that perspectives are permitted only from this corner'.<sup>52</sup> Education as *merely* teaching to lie then points to evoking the disposition of self-overcoming<sup>53</sup>—whereby evoking means arousing as well as provoking.

The child, then, discovers that the cultural and historical shape of the world and the socialised and culturalised moulding of her own self are lies. It is important to notice that this does not lead her towards *the truth*, as should be clear now from Nietzsche's perspectivism, but rather, room is made for the appreciation of lying *as* lying. For Nietzsche the only truth there possibly can be in the end is this notion of lying as lying. 'I was the first to *discover* the truth, through the fact that I was the first to experience the lie as lie'.<sup>54</sup> Alteration, renewal, personal interpretation of the world, freeing oneself from the socio-cultural straitjacket and so on, do not take place against the background of a true world or on the ground of an essential nucleus, but should be understood as 'a continuously shifting falseness':<sup>55</sup> the child must make her own lies, again and again. She will be most herself when continuously acknowledging her own indefiniteness, that is to say when showing herself to be open to a multiplicity of possibilities. 'It is always more obvious to me that the philosopher, as a man *indispensable* for the morrow and the day after the morrow, has ever found himself, and *has been obliged* to find himself, in contradiction to the day in which he lives; his enemy has always been the ideal of his day'.<sup>56</sup> In a certain sense one should therefore say that the true individual never shall *be*, but always *shall be*.

However difficult this task may be, the arrival of the higher human being is more than welcomed by Nietzsche. For Nietzsche's analysis of his time leads him to conclude that human beings are living in the mentality of the herd: '*Morality in Europe at present is herding-animal morality*'.<sup>57</sup> Human beings become dull under the impulse of, *inter alia*, typical modern ideas and Christianity;<sup>58</sup> they degenerate into mediocrity and superficiality and satisfy themselves with the stultifying repetition of what they have been spoonfed—which is for Nietzsche the greatest danger for humankind:

The leveling and diminution of European man is our greatest danger; because the sight of him makes us despond . . . We no longer see anything these days that aspires to grow greater; instead, we have a suspicion that things will continue to go downhill, becoming even thinner, more placid, smarter, cosier, more ordinary, more indifferent, more Chinese, more Christian—without doubt man is getting ‘better’ all the time . . . This is Europe’s true predicament: together with the fear of man we have also lost the love of man, reverence for man, confidence in man, indeed the *will to man*. Now the sight of man makes us despond. What is nihilism today if not that?<sup>59</sup>

That is why, according to Nietzsche, every culture needs individuals who consciously commit themselves to that culture’s values, revalue them and thus revitalise them. The true individual *speaks* where the herd fails to speak, she eases the tightness of the chains with which the herd is enchained. This individual, ‘anti-christ and anti-nihilist’, frees herself from her will to nothing, to nihilism.<sup>60</sup>

### RELATIVISM VERSUS DELIBERATE COMMITMENT

Are we at this point obliged to conclude that it does not matter then just what the individual does? In other words, is relativism the inevitable outcome? One could answer this in a strictly philosophical way and argue that the question of relativism does not arise at all for Nietzsche because of his perspectivism. Nietzsche explicitly intends to settle once and for all the opposition between absolute and relative: for want of absolute knowledge and truth—of a world which is not mediated through representations—there is no sense at all in speaking about relative knowledge and truth. Hence the problem of relativism dissolves naturally with Nietzsche. This answer however may not be convincing for some. As the matter of relativism is too complex to be fully developed here, I shall conclude by indicating some relevant issues.

As indicated above, Nietzsche can be seen as the founding designer of postmodernism since he deconstructs the foundational conceptual frameworks of modernity and consequently of education along modernity’s lines. However, that there are no objectively justifiable grounds for an educator’s action any more does not tempt Nietzsche to say that everyone is correct. Nor does he shift the educational burden to the child (in a final attempt to provide education with firm foundations again), for as has been made clear, even for Nietzsche meaning does not arise from within the individual himself or herself. Nietzsche’s perspectivism, the outcome of the lack of objective foundations, can be understood as an incentive to stop looking for justifications and instead to articulate clearly what one stands for. For one could say that it is precisely the belief in objectively justifiable standards in education that can give rise to stultifying repetition, so feared by Nietzsche. If what one intends to represent is absolute or final truth, then in the long run a clear articulation is not needed, so one could say, for in the end the truth

will prevail. As there are no objective foundations but only perspectives, it is necessary for the educator, and later on for the child, to articulate what he or she stands for. So when Nietzsche says ‘My opinion is *my* opinion: another person has not easily a right to it’,<sup>61</sup> he is not making a plea for a subjectivist point of view, nor for relativism, but he is emphasising the importance of a serious engagement with what one stands for. Making moral decisions—and what is education if not this—is not a matter of plain and simple reenactment of what is logically entailed and justified by one’s culture’s expectations, but is in the end a highly personal matter. ‘“Good” is no longer good when one’s neighbour takes it into his mouth.’<sup>62</sup>

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## NOTES

1. Johnston (1998), p. 79.
2. Cf. Johnston (1998), pp. 71–72.
3. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (BGE), sec. 188.
4. Nietzsche, BGE, sec. 188.
5. Cf. Nietzsche, BGE, sec. 188.
6. Nietzsche, *Unfashionable Observations* (UO), p. 163.
7. Nietzsche, UO, p. 163.
8. Cf. Nietzsche, UO, p. 164.
9. Nietzsche, GM, I, sec. 17.
10. Nietzsche, BGE, sec. 211.
11. Nietzsche, BGE, sec. 211.
12. Cf. Nietzsche, BGE, sec. 211.
13. Nietzsche, BGE, sec. 258.
14. Nietzsche, *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense* (OTLN), p. 81.
15. Cf. Nietzsche, BGE, sec. 188.
16. Nietzsche, BGE, sec. 268.
17. Nietzsche, BGE, sec. 192.
18. Nietzsche, BGE, sec. 192.
19. Cf. Nietzsche, e.g. BGE, Preface; *Human, All too Human* (HAH), I, Preface, sec. 6.
20. Cf. Nietzsche, GM, III, sec. 12.
21. Cf. Nietzsche, BGE, sec. 22.; cf. also *Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden* (KSA), 12, 7[60] (Translation of his unpublished fragments is not available, so the references to these passages are to the German text. The first figure refers to the volume, the next to a period of time delimited in that volume, and the number between brackets to the section of that delimited part.)
22. Nietzsche, KSA, 11, 38[14].
23. Nietzsche, BGE, sec. 34; KSA, 12, 3[106].
24. Nietzsche, KSA, 6 (Götzendämmerung) (author’s translation).
25. Cf. Nietzsche, e.g. BGE, secs. 34, 230, 259; GM, II, 11; KSA, 11, 25[505].

26. Nietzsche, KSA, 13, 14[84] (author's translation).
27. Nietzsche, BGE, sec. 34.
28. Nietzsche, KSA, 13, 14[134] (author's translation).
29. Nietzsche, BGE, sec. 20.
30. Cf. Nietzsche, KSA, 12, 9[91].
31. Nietzsche, UO, p. 281.
32. Nietzsche, OTLN, p. 88–89.
33. By education I mean child-rearing as well as schooling.
34. Nietzsche, BGE, sec. 194.
35. Cf. Johnston, 1998.
36. Johnston, 1998, p. 81.
37. Cf. Johnston, 1998, p. 68.
38. Johnston, 1998, resp. p. 68, 69, 78.
39. Nietzsche, BGE, sec. 63 (author's translation. Zimmern's translation goes as follows: 'man is *the animal not yet properly adapted to his environment*'. However, this is, I think, definitely not what Nietzsche means by 'das *noch nicht festgestellte Tier*').
40. Cf. Nietzsche, KSA, 11, sec. 107. See also Van Tongeren, 1994, p. 145.
41. Nietzsche, *Thus spoke Zarathustra* (TSZ), sec. 4, 43.
42. Nietzsche, BGE, sec. 230.
43. Nietzsche, KSA, 12, 7[1] (author's translation).
44. Cf. Nietzsche, HAH, I, sec. 28.
45. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (GS), V, sec. 346.
46. Nietzsche, KSA, 11, 25[470] (author's translation).
47. Cf. Nietzsche, the subtitle of *Ecce Homo*: 'How to become what you are'.
48. Cf. Van Tongeren, 1994, p. 147.
49. Cooper, 1983, pp. 122–123.
50. Nietzsche, UO, p. 160.
51. To be entirely correct, this matter is not settled (yet) in his second *Unfashionable Observation*. Besides this reference to the fact that experiences can only be talked about after being intersubjectively conceptualised (e.g. by the educator)—a private language argument *avant la lettre*—Nietzsche does also refer to such a thing as an 'individual feeling that does not yet bear the stamp of words' (p. 162). Furthermore he states that youth, which is the safeguard of a life-enriching culture, 'will be able to use no concepts, no party slogans from among the verbal and conceptual coins that are currently in circulation, to designate their own being' (p. 165). It is tempting to interpret this in a subjectivistic manner, or at least to leave it an open question whether or not Nietzsche thinks there to be such a thing as a 'meaning-full' preconceptual content. However, in view of Nietzsche's other (early) writings, especially *On Lies and Truth in a Nonmoral Sense*, this interpretation seems to me to be incorrect. It is more fruitful, in my opinion, to interpret this as follows: youth cannot use concepts etc. to designate their own being because every conceptualisation is detrimental to what it really is: impossible to be tied to one (strain of) word(s).
52. Nietzsche, GS, V, sec. 374.
53. I am indebted to Paul Smeyers for this particular way of putting it.
54. Nietzsche, KSA 6 (*Ecce Homo*, sec. 1 of chapter *Why I am a destiny*) (author's translation).
55. Nietzsche, KSA, 12, 2[108] (author's translation).
56. Nietzsche, BGE, sec. 212.
57. Nietzsche, BGE, sec. 202.
58. Cf. Nietzsche, BGE, sec. 203.
59. Nietzsche, GM, I, sec. 12.
60. Cf. Nietzsche, GM, II, sec. 24.
61. Nietzsche, BGE, sec. 43.
62. Nietzsche, BGE, sec. 43.

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